MONTANA READING FIRST

ANNUAL EVALUATION REPORT
2005–2006

Kari Nelsestuen
Elizabeth Autio
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Center for Research, Evaluation, and Assessment
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Acknowledgements

Evaluators extend thanks to all those who aided in this year's evaluation. The state project director and Reading First specialists were very helpful, answering questions and providing documentation and support as necessary. State project staff members also went out of their way to make evaluators feel welcomed at project events.

A special thanks to all of the principals, reading coaches, teachers, and district staff members who graciously completed lengthy surveys, hosted intensive site visits, and participated in phone interviews. Again this year, the response rate for surveys was extremely high which helped ensure that the data in this report reflect project activities and outcomes across the state.

In addition to the excellent analysis, writing, and editing of my co-authors, I also extend appreciation to other NWREL colleagues who contributed to this report: Angela Roccograndi crunched and presented DIBELS in the tables found in Chapter 6; Theresa Deussen gave invaluable feedback on chapter drafts; Tess Bridgman mailed and tracked all of the survey responses, and Ann Rader provided assistance throughout the year, including editing this final report.

~~ Kari Nelsestuen
Senior Program Advisor, NWREL

Executive Summary

The 2005–2006 evaluation found evidence of many new and continued successes in Montana Reading First. State, school, and district staff members worked hard to implement, deepen, or sustain Reading First practices in their schools. By the spring, about two-thirds of Montana Reading First students were at benchmark, as measured by the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy* (DIBELS), representing statistically significant increases from the beginning of the year.

Spring 2006 marked the end of the three-year grant cycle for cohort 1. All 20 schools applied for, and received, a small amount of continuation funding for 2006–2007 with the agreement that most key components of the grant would be continued. At the same time, 13 cohort 2 schools ended their first year of Reading First, having made great strides in implementation. As discussed throughout this report, cohort 1 schools reached a deeper level of implementation and buy-in by the end of their grant cycle than cohort 2 reached in just one year. However, it cannot be assumed that cohort 2 schools will follow the same trajectory as their peers since the cohorts began the grant in different places and have different characteristics.

Grant implementation was not without challenges. All schools, especially those in cohort 2, have room to deepen implementation to further boost student achievement.

Professional Development and Technical Assistance

With 33 Reading First schools in 24 districts, the state Reading First staff was extremely busy providing professional development and technical assistance to schools and districts. The state-sponsored summer institutes, attended by all schools, received high marks for relevance and quality. Bimonthly meetings for coaches and principals were also very well received, providing useful information, resources, and adequate time to network with peers. Among cohort 2 coaches and principals, there was some call for more differentiation in future meetings.

In addition to the summer institute, teachers received professional development from external consultants and/or core program representatives who visited their schools; these opportunities were fairly well received. In most schools, the reading coach was responsible for the majority of professional development opportunities, providing one-on-one coaching and group training at grade-level meetings, study groups, or other forums. Coaches worked hard to establish trust in schools; these efforts paid off as the majority of teachers found coaches to be helpful, knowledgeable, and their allies.

While all teachers reported receiving some assistance from the coach during the year, there was variation in both the frequency and content of coaching. While there was evidence that coaches worked quite intensely with some teachers, other teachers received

no or very little one-on-one coaching. About one-fifth of surveyed teachers, for example, were observed by the coach quite infrequently (once or a few times a year). Data suggest that coaches sometimes avoided resistant teachers and/or worked with either new teachers or those struggling the most with program materials. Teachers who were "doing okay" were often left alone.

Reading study groups were also held in every school, often monthly or bimonthly. Perceptions of study groups, which were quite mixed last year, improved among cohort 1 participants, partially due to a well-received book selection this year. In cohort 2, however, many teachers remained unconvinced that study groups were worthwhile.

Another area that received mixed reviews was Knowledge Box, the digital learning software system that schools were required to purchase for the grant. While a few schools used the software frequently, most reported that they did not utilize the software to its full potential. Cohort 2 schools were plagued with technical setbacks, causing some schools to not be able to access the software until the end of the year.

Although much learning happened in 2005–2006, participants called for more and deepened training in many areas. Coaches and principals asked for more tools and training to work with resistant staff members; some coaches wanted more training in coaching methods and some principals wanted further training in instructional leadership, including providing feedback to teachers. Teacher needs and interests varied greatly, suggesting a continued need for differentiating training at the state and local levels.

Leadership

Montana Reading First districts vary in size from one school to over 20 schools. District coordinators, who had varying levels of involvement in grant activities, reported providing supports to schools such as grant management and analysis of student data. While most principals characterized their district as supportive of the grant, a small group of principals felt their district was overly involved or unsupportive.

Reading First principals are expected to be both a grant manager and an instructional leader. Data indicate that most principals spent a great deal of time on grant activities, including attending meetings, observing teachers, and analyzing data. As evidence of principals' strong commitment to being in reading classrooms, the majority of teachers reported that their principal observed their reading block weekly. However, principals did not always provide feedback to teachers, and the frequency of their attendance at reading-related meetings declined from last year in cohort 1. Among cohort 2 principals, one-third felt the grant expectations for involvement in instructional matters was excessive.

Reading coaches continued to work long hours to fill a variety of roles and responsibilities. The evaluation found that their time, on average, was divided into four main areas: assessment-related tasks (26% of their week), coaching K–3 teachers (24%),

interventions (14%), and other tasks such as paperwork and attending professional development (36%). However, there was wide variation in the amount of time individual coaches spent on various tasks; some coaches spent little to no time providing one-on-one coaching, for example, while others dedicated over a third of their time to this activity. Almost all cohort 1 coaches felt their role was clearly defined; about two-thirds of their cohort 2 colleagues concurred.

All schools had Reading Leadership Teams which met monthly, most often to review data or share information about reading in their school. Grade-level meetings were also held in all schools; most teachers attended these meetings at least monthly and considered them a good use of their time. These meetings, and other forums, helped increase communication and collaboration in Reading First schools according to participants. Some schools, especially in cohort 1, said their communication was very thoughtful and meaningful; other schools were still growing in this area.

Similar to last year, data systems for the collection, analysis, and use of assessment data were firmly established in Reading First schools. Furthermore, teachers, coaches, and principals reported frequent and varied uses of data to make decisions. Most schools were confident that the DIBELS benchmark assessment was administered consistently in the fall, winter, and spring. Teachers' perceptions of the DIBELS, which improved over time among cohort 1 teachers, was less positive among cohort 2 teachers.

Instruction

The structures for reading instruction, which were well-established in cohort 1 schools last year, were established in cohort 2 schools this year. This included a 90-minute block of reading instruction for grades 1–3 in all but one school (at least 60 minutes in kindergarten), use of a core program, and interventions for struggling readers. New to both cohorts this year was the addition of lesson maps and templates to guide the use of the core program.

Most teachers reported that they were satisfied with the core program and followed the lesson maps with fairly strict fidelity. In general, cohort 1 schools had a more flexible definition of fidelity while cohort 2 schools held to a tighter definition; they made fewer modifications, additions, or subtractions to their core program. Although most interviewed teachers found the expectations of using the core program reasonable, there were some concerns that the pacing was still inappropriate and that some students were left behind while the needs of the highest-level students were not being met.

To target instruction to students' levels, Montana Reading First schools grouped students either within and/or across classrooms, using assessment data to determine group configurations. While grouping helped in their efforts to differentiate instruction, a sizable proportion of teachers reported that their students needed more differentiation than they were able to provide during reading. Large group size and lack of

paraprofessionals were sometimes cited as roadblocks to targeting instruction effectively; fidelity requirements were also cited.

Many research-based instructional practices in the areas of comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency were common practice in Reading First schools, according to self-reports of teachers and observations by coaches. For example, teachers reported commonly activating background knowledge when introducing new vocabulary and providing multiple opportunities for students to practice (e.g., chorally, with partners, with an adult). Data suggest that other research-based strategies need further enforcement, particularly in cohort 2 schools. These include ending round-robin reading, ensuring students have adequate independent-level text, developing user-friendly definitions of words, and using both examples and non-examples.

The instruction observed by evaluators in randomly selected cohort 2 classrooms, were of varying quality. While some lessons were clear and engaging, others were not, or showed room for improvement. Similarly, evaluators sometimes observed teachers monitoring student understanding, modeling, and providing feedback, while other times these practices were weak or absent. These findings further support the need for individualized coaching and differentiated professional development for teachers.

Interventions

One-third of Montana Reading First students (33%) received at least 12 hours of interventions, while one-fourth (26%) received interventions of shorter duration. Although the majority of coaches, principals, and teachers believed that their schools were doing a good job providing appropriate interventions, a substantial proportion of schools were unable to serve all of the students who needed them (this was especially true in cohort 2). Schools cited time, scheduling, lack of trained staff, and lack of appropriate materials as the main challenges. Another issue that arose related to interventions was group size; while Montana Reading First recommends that groups be five students or fewer, half of schools said they had some groups that ranged from six to 18 students in size.

Student Assessment Results

In spring 2006, the following percentage of students at each grade level were at benchmark on the DIBELS:

Kindergarten	70%
Grade 1	67%
Grade 2	60%
Grade 3	54%

At the project level, these spring scores represent a statistically significant increase from fall 2005 to spring 2006 at every grade level. There were also statistically significant decreases in the percentage of students in intensive.

Cohort 1. There were gains in the percentage of students at benchmark from fall 2005 to spring 2006 in every grade in cohort 1. From spring 2005 to spring 2006, there were gains in the percentage of students at benchmark in kindergarten and grades one and two, but a decrease in grade three. None of these changes were statistically significant.

Initial longitudinal data for cohort 1 indicate that there have been successes with students who began Reading First in kindergarten, particularly in retaining students at benchmark. Another success has been Montana's substantial strides in moving strategic and intensive students to benchmark over time. Specifically, 67 percent of strategic kindergarteners and 48 percent of intensive kindergarteners moved to benchmark by the end of first grade.

Cohort 2. By the end of the first year of Reading First, almost two-thirds of cohort 2 students were at benchmark. The largest proportion of students at benchmark was in first grade (68%), followed by kindergarten (63%), second grade (61%), and third grade (54%). These represent substantial gains over the year, especially in kindergarten and first grade.

Variations in Student Achievement. Among Native American students—who comprise one-third of Montana Reading First students—growth from fall 2005 to spring 2006 exceeded their peers in three of four grades. Growth was particularly strong for first-grade Native American students in cohort 2. While this growth was impressive, it was not yet enough to make up the achievement gap; the percentage of Native American students at benchmark was lower than their white counterparts. However, there was a wide range in gap of students at benchmark, from from 26 percentage points (cohort 1 first grade) to just four percentage points (cohort 2 third grade).

The rate of growth for kindergarten students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL) was similar to their non-eligible counterparts in both cohorts. This was also true for first grade in cohort 2. However, in other grades the rate of growth did not continue to keep pace with their peers and FRL students remained less likely to be at benchmark and more likely to be in the intensive grouping.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on report findings and detailed in the final chapter of the report.

- Continue to provide high-quality professional development and technical assistance to schools.

- Provide support and training to help coaches further differentiate their coaching and maximize their time spent with teachers.

- Identify and, if possible, eliminate excess paperwork.

- Continue to build the content of Knowledge Box; encourage and model its use.

- Address real or perceived concerns about the "high-achieving" kids.

- Share and use evaluation findings.

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Chapter One:
Introduction

Reading First

Reading First is a federal initiative authorized by Title I, Part B, Subpart 1 of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* as amended by the *No Child Left Behind Act* of 2001. Often characterized as "the means by which the goals of NCLB are to be achieved," Reading First provides an unprecedented amount of funding and focused support for the improvement of K–3 reading instruction, with the ultimate goal of ensuring that all children read at grade level by the end of third grade. In support of this goal, Reading First funds states to support comprehensive programs to improve reading instruction at selected Reading First schools, as well as more broadly in the state.

Most funds states receive under Reading First are distributed to selected Reading First districts and schools which are eligible for the grant based on state-determined criteria (generally a combination of poverty level and history of low reading performance). While states vary in their plans to implement Reading First, most states' plans include many of the following expectations of grantee schools:

- Selection and implementation of core reading program materials from a list of approved research-based materials or evidence that core reading program materials have been selected on the basis of a rigorous evaluation process.

- Selection and implementation of research-based reading interventions from a list of approved research-based materials (or, again, evidence of rigorous review of materials).

- Attendance of all K–3 staff members at a special research-based summer reading institute each year, as well as the school principal and district K–12 special education teachers.

- Hiring of a full-time reading coach to provide mentoring, coaching, training, and demonstration lessons.

- Creation of a Reading Leadership Team to guide the design and implementation of the grant.

- Attendance of reading coaches, district-level coordinators, and principals at regular state-provided professional development.

- Use of approved assessments that are valid and reliable, analyses of results, and use of results to make reading improvement decisions.

- Identification of students in need of intensive reading interventions and provision of appropriate, targeted interventions in a small group setting.

- Agreement to visits from independent evaluators, as well as state and federal Reading First administrators, and use of their feedback.

Montana Reading First

The Montana Office of Public Instruction (OPI) was awarded a six-year federal Reading First state grant in July 2003, and, after an initial planning and sub-grant application stage, awarded sub-grants to 17 schools in January 2004. An additional three schools were added to cohort 1 in June 2004. Spring 2006 marked the end of their three-year grant cycle, although all 20 schools were provided with small continuation grants through an application process. Cohort 1 schools are listed in Table 1-1.

Table 1-1
Montana Cohort 1 Reading First Schools

School, by District	K-3 Enrollment*	School, by District	K-3 Enrollment*
Billings		**Hardin**	
Newman	197	Crow Agency	159
Ponderosa	254	Hardin Intermediate (3)	88
Butte		Hardin Primary (K-2)	240
Kennedy	161	**Hays**	
Whittier	229	Hays Lodge Pole	45
Centerville		**Lame Deer**	
Centerville	48	Lame Deer	191
Charlo		**Libby**	
Charlo	101	Libby	400
Dixon		**Ronan**	
Dixon	35	KW Harvey	239
East Helena		Pablo	174
Eastgate (K-2)	372	**Helena**	
Radley (3)	119	Warren	166
Great Falls			
Longfellow	166		
West	202		

*Enrollment based on data collected from each school in summer and fall 2006.

A second cohort of schools applied for a three year grant beginning in fall 2005. Thirteen schools from 13 districts were given cohort 2 grants. These schools are listed in Table 1-2.

Table 1-2
Montana Cohort 2 Reading First Schools

District	School	K-3 Enrollment*
Box Elder	Box Elder	131
Butte	West Butte	236
Dodson	Dodson	14
East Glacier Park	East Glacier Park	15
Evergreen	East Evergreen	314
Frazer	Frazer	25
Great Falls	Morningside	172
Harlem	Harlem	178
Heart Butte	Heart Butte	57
Lodge Grass	Lodge Grass	83
Rocky Boy	Rocky Boy	186
Somers	Lakeside	234
Stevensville	Stevensville	255

*Enrollment based on data collected from each school in summer and fall 2006.

Located in a large western state, Montana Reading First schools are spread out over hundreds of miles, from the reservations of southeastern Montana to the mountains near Glacier Park. Accordingly, schools vary greatly by size and other demographic variables.

- Schools range in size from 14 to 372 students in grades K–3.

- In total, the 33 Reading First schools include 33 percent Native American students; this percentage ranges from zero to 100 percent among schools. There are very few students from other ethnic backgrounds such as Hispanic or African American.

- Nine percent of Montana Reading First students are English Language Learners (ELL); most of these students are Native American.

The External Evaluation

The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory (NWREL) signed a contract in August 2004 to be the external evaluators for Montana Reading First. The approved evaluation incorporates and integrates both formative and summative evaluation components to examine the following broad areas:

- Effectiveness of the technical assistance provided to grant recipients

- Quality and level of implementation of statewide Reading First activities

- Impact of Reading First activities on desired student and teacher outcomes

This report presents data from the 2005–2006 school year from cohorts 1 and 2. The approaches and instruments used to address the evaluation questions are described in Chapter Two: Evaluation Methods.

Chapter Two:
Evaluation Methods

The evaluation of Montana Reading First collected data about both the implementation and the impact of the project. As in past years, the evaluation relied on information from a variety of instruments and respondents to capture the experience of a wide range of project participants.

The instruments used in the 2005–2006 evaluation included the following:

- **Spring surveys**—surveys of all teachers, coaches, and principals from all Montana Reading First schools, as well as of the district coordinators in each district.

- **Site visits to six randomly selected cohort 2 schools which included:**

    - **Interviews** with principals and coaches
    - **Focus groups** with randomly selected teachers
    - **Classroom observations**—during site visits, targeted observations of three reading lessons at every school selected for a site visit

- **Telephone interviews** with principals, coaches, and randomly selected teachers from 10 randomly selected cohort 1 schools.

- **Student assessments**—K–3 assessment scores on the DIBELS.

- **Ongoing review of project documents,** as well as observations of two-day principal and coach meeting.

Every year, evaluation instruments undergo a comprehensive review and revision process. The instruments used this year were very similar to those used in the previous year's evaluation; a large proportion of survey and interview items were retained in order to permit an analysis of change over time. They were, however, further refined in order to:

- identify redundancies and gaps in existing evaluation instruments

- gather information about new program areas that deserved attention

- address all topic areas and encompass the viewpoints of multiple stakeholders while minimizing data collection burdens on school and project staff members

This chapter describes each of these instruments in detail, including major changes made, as well as selection process and/or response rates obtained and any limitations or cautions about the data collected via one of the instruments.

Copies of all instruments are included in the Appendix.

Spring Surveys

In spring 2006, surveys were administered to school staff members involved in Reading First. The surveys were designed to gather information on school and classroom practices, perceptions of Reading First, and its impact during the 2005–2006 year of implementation. They contained close-ended questions about areas related to grant implementation, including assessments, use of the core program, student grouping, collaboration, professional development, beliefs, and attitudes about Reading First, and sustainability. These surveys included:

- Principal survey (85 items)

- Reading coach survey (154 items)

- Teacher survey for staff members who taught K–3 reading during the past year (not including aides or student teachers) (130 items)

- District survey for district Reading First liaisons/coordinators (27 items)

Coach, principal, and teacher surveys were mailed to the reading coach at each school with explicit instructions for administration. Coaches were encouraged to set aside time for survey completion at a staff meeting or other already reserved time. Survey instructions encouraged respondents to be candid in their answers and assured respondents' anonymity; cover sheets for each survey further explained the purpose of the survey and intended use of the data. To further encourage honest responses, respondents received confidentiality envelopes in which to seal their surveys before turning them in. Completed surveys were collected by the reading coaches, who were asked to mail them back to NWREL.

NWREL received surveys from 33 of the 33 schools—a 100 percent response rate overall, although one principal did not return the survey and 340 teachers returned surveys out of an estimated 450 teachers across all 33 schools.

The majority of teacher respondents were regular classroom teachers (90%); the remainder were specialists such as special education. Regardless of position, all of these respondents are referred to as "teachers" unless otherwise noted.

District surveys were mailed directly to district liaisons/coordinators identified on a contact list provided by the state. NWREL received surveys from 10 out of 15 district coordinators.

Survey responses in this report are rounded to the nearest whole number. In some tables and figures, totals do not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Site Visits

This year, six cohort 2 schools were visited by one of two trained evaluators. Prior to each site visit, reading coaches and/or principals were contacted to make arrangements for the visit. Site visits included interviews with the principal and coach, a focus group with teachers (randomly selected), and observations of three classrooms (also randomly selected). This was very similar to the structure of the visits made in 2005, although interview protocols were revised to reflect program changes and data collection priorities.

Interviews

Interviews with both the principal and reading coach covered a similar range of topics: the roles of each, the type and perceived effectiveness of professional development they had received, their experience with technical assistance from the state, perceptions of instructional change at the school, use of assessments, changes in communication and collaboration, as well as challenges and successes of the past year. The coach interview was somewhat longer than the principal interview.

Interviews were not taped; instead, extensive notes were recorded and then summarized for each school. Consequently, the quotes provided in this report are not verbatim, but do represent, to the degree possible, the actual wording of the respondents.

Interview questions were deliberately open-ended. This provided a good balance to the surveys, which pre-defined the issues for respondents and asked them to express what might be complex opinions by checking one of four or five choices. The interviews, in contrast, allowed respondents to answer by talking about the issues or concerns most relevant to them. Qualitative analyses focused on patterns found among respondents, rather than exact counts, because the open-ended nature of the questions allowed a range of different responses.

Respondents were encouraged to talk candidly about their experience with Reading First and promised confidentiality. For this reason, the responses provided are never identified by individual, school, or district.

Focus Groups

In order to obtain the perspectives of teachers at Reading First schools, focus groups were held with classroom teachers at all seven visited schools. This marked a change from previous years in which focus groups were held with members of the Reading Leadership Team and brief individual interviews were held with teachers who had been observed. This year evaluators wanted to hear from a wider range of teachers, including those who might not be on the Reading Leadership Team and as centrally involved in the implementation of Reading First.

Teacher focus groups asked for participant discussion on aspects of classroom instruction such as fidelity and differentiated instruction, their experience working with the reading coach, and sustainability.

Evaluators asked coaches to use a random method—usually alphabetical by first or last name—to chose four teachers (one from each grade). Principals and reading coaches did not attend the focus groups.

Classroom Observations

Most schools structure reading during one consecutive 90-minute reading block, which meant that evaluators only had a total of 90 minutes in which to observe as much reading instruction as possible. For this reason, evaluators visited portions of three classes, at different grade levels, for 20 to 30 minutes each, well aware that this information would provide only a "snapshot" of the instruction that occurred at the school.

Evaluators randomly selected three of the four grades to observe at each school so approximately the same number would be observed at each grade across all the schools. Site visitors then randomly selected classrooms at those grades by telling coaches they would like to visit the classes of teachers whose name fell in a certain place in the alphabet.

In total, site visitors conducted 17 classroom observations, spread fairly evenly across grades: kindergarten (35%), first grade (23%), second grade (23%), and third grade (29%). The length of observations ranged from 15 to 45 minutes, with an average of 21 minutes. The core program was Harcourt in 14 observed classrooms and Success for All in the remaining three classrooms.

During the observations, the evaluators focused on the work of the teacher and, to a lesser degree, the response of the students. For example, if the teacher was working with a group of five students, and other students were working with a paraprofessional or on their own, in groups or individually, the observation focused on the small group work of the teacher. Paraprofessionals and other adults were not explicitly observed, although their presence in the classroom was noted. Evaluators took detailed notes in consecutive

five-minute blocks, recording chronologically what the teacher did and how students responded. After the observation, evaluators used their notes to record what was being taught in each five-minute block during the observation (phonics, vocabulary, etc.), and then used a rubric to rate certain characteristics of the lesson, such as its clarity, the level of student engagement, and the level of appropriate monitoring and feedback.

When excerpts from observation notes are included in the text as examples, student names have been changed in order to protect confidentiality.

Validity and Reliability

The term "validity" in research is used to describe the degree to which the data being collected are an accurate measurement of the information desired. It is crucial to establish that the observation protocol records information that actually describes elements of instruction and in particular, that it describes elements of instruction that have a real impact on student achievement.

Reliability refers to the degree to which a tool measures the same thing in the same way. When multiple observers are in classrooms using numerical ratings to summarize some of the information about instruction, it is important to ensure that each observer rates the same lesson in the same way.

The creation of the observation protocol was a multi-step process designed to maximize the validity of the tool within the time and budget constraints of the evaluation. The designers began by reviewing recent literature on those elements of reading instruction that have been shown to be clearly linked to differences in student achievement (Foorman and Schatschneider 2003; Taylor et al., 2000; Snow et al., 1998). This work highlighted a few key areas: subject of the lesson, clarity of the lesson, ongoing monitoring and adjustment to student understanding, providing clear feedback to students, classroom environment, providing opportunities to practice, and student engagement.

Reliability of the observation protocol was assessed when a team of reading evaluators compiled a first draft of an observation tool and used this to visit a non-Reading First, former Reading Excellence Act school in Portland, Oregon. There, two or three evaluators visited the same classroom at the same time and then completed a rating form. After the visit, they carefully compared and discussed ratings, identifying items on which it was harder to achieve agreement. Preliminary inter-rater reliability was 81.3 percent (within one point of agreement). A subsequent test of reliability was conducted at an Arizona Reading First school. Teams of two evaluators conducted observations of eight lessons and rated their observations independently (inter-rater reliability was 91.2 percent within one point of agreement). Problematic items were revised, and rubrics were developed to better clarify the basis for making decisions about the ratings on each items.

After the actual site visits, ratings of different site visitors were compared, and some evaluators appeared to rate consistently lower or higher than others. It is difficult to

know whether the differences reflected true differences in the schools or differences in site visitor rating. In order not to place excessive weight on the difference between, for example, a "1" and a "2" rating, low (0-2 point) and high (3-4 point) ratings were collapsed for the analyses presented in this report.

In addition to recording ratings, evaluators also logged what was happening in the classroom, and these notes were used to provide the qualitative examples in the text.

Student Assessments

DIBELS

Student progress in reading across the 33 Montana Reading First schools was monitored with the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills,* or DIBELS. DIBELS measures the progress of student reading development from kindergarten through third grade in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, and fluency.

The 'benchmark' assessment is administered three times a year: fall, winter, and spring. It includes five measures—Initial Sound Fluency, Letter Naming Fluency, Nonsense Word Fluency, Phoneme Segmentation Fluency, and Oral Reading Fluency—for which benchmark levels have been established. Two additional measures—Retell Fluency and Word Use Fluency—are available, although there are no benchmarks for these measures. In accordance with DIBELS administration guidelines, not all measures are administered to all students at each testing period; instead, only those measures are administered that apply to skills students should be mastering at a particular period. Table 2-1 indicates which measure is administered to each grade level at each assessment period.

Table 2-1
Scheduled Administration of DIBELS Assessment Measures

Measure	Fall	Winter	Spring
Initial Sound Fluency (ISF)	K	K	--
Letter Naming Fluency (LNF)	K, 1	K	K
Phoneme Segmentation Fluency (PSF)	1	K, 1	K, 1
Nonsense Word Fluency (NWF)	1	K, 1	K, 1
Oral Reading Fluency (ORF)	2, 3	1, 2, 3	1, 2, 3
Retell Fluency (RTF)	2, 3	1, 2, 3	1, 2, 3
Word Use Fluency (WUF)	K, 1, 2, 3	K, 1, 2, 3	K, 1, 2, 3

Collection and analysis of DIBELS data. Administration of the DIBELS assessment took place at the individual Reading First schools thee times during fall, winter, and

spring assessment windows set by state project staff members. The benchmark assessments were administered by school or district assessment teams.

After results were collected, DIBELS scores were entered into the online AIMSweb database. Data were downloaded by AIMSweb staff and sent to NWREL in June 2006.

The analyses in this report include only matched students, or those who had both fall and spring results reported and who were continuously enrolled.

Calculation of DIBELS instructional recommendations. A student's raw score from each DIBELS measure places them in one of three categories: "at risk/deficit," "some risk/emerging," or "low risk/established." When multiple measures are administered, these categories are further rolled up by grade level and testing window to produce an *overall* instructional support recommendation (ISR) for each student: "intensive," "strategic," or "benchmark." These categories are defined by the assessment developers, based on the analyses of tens of thousands of student assessments. NWREL followed the guidelines of the DIBELS developers in order to combine scores and determine overall instructional recommendations.

Calculation of the statistical significance of changes in student assessment scores. The Pearson chi-square test was used to determine whether the change in percentage of students at benchmark changed significantly from last year to this year. McNemar's test (which is based on the chi-square distribution, but accounts for data that are matched from one point in time to the next) was used to determine the statistical significance of changes among matched students from fall to spring of the current school year.

Chapter Three:
Professional Development and
Technical Assistance to Schools

This chapter reports on the delivery, relevance, and reception of Reading First professional development provided at the 2005 Summer Institute and during the 2005–2006 school year. This included coach and principals' meetings, and a variety of types of professional development for teachers. The chapter also reviews feedback on technical assistance provided by state project staff members.

Summer Institutes

The first large-scale professional development for cohort 2 schools was the 2005 Montana Reading First Summer Institute held in Great Falls. The institute included sessions for teachers, paraprofessionals, coaches, and principals from all cohort 2 schools. The institute provided hands-on training in each core program, as well as training in assessment and other areas.

To address the need for further differentiation of professional development, OPI decided that cohort 1 schools would attend local summer trainings that could cover topics specific to each school's needs, rather than hold an all-cohort institute. State project staff members worked with schools, using information from their Reading Improvement Plan (RIP) to determine those individualized needs. Training topics varied by institute and included analyzing assessment data, providing interventions, training new teachers, and further training on the use of core program materials.

The majority of surveyed teachers (86%) and principals (85%) reported attending one of the above summer training opportunities. Similar to ratings in past years, teachers gave the institutes high marks for relevance and quality. Ratings were similar for cohort 1 and cohort 2. That is, across cohorts:

- 91 percent of teachers agreed the institutes were relevant to their work

- 90 percent reported that they had implemented strategies that they had learned

- 82 percent agreed that presentations were high-quality

- 80 percent agreed that there were adequate opportunities to share with colleagues (cohort 1 was more likely to agree, likely due to the smaller size of the local institutes)

- 36 percent agreed that the information was review for them (cohort 1 was more likely to agree)

The four district coordinators who attended a summer institute also found the training useful.

Professional Development for Coaches and Principals

Coaches and principals from Reading First schools were required to attend bimonthly meetings which rotated locations around the state. Separate meetings were held for cohort 1 and cohort 2 because of their varying needs. The meetings were used for sharing information and providing professional development on a range of topics from using assessment data to content areas such as reading comprehension. State project staff members, as well as outside consultants such as the Consortium on Reading Excellence (CORE) and reading consultant Jo Robinson, led these meetings.

Echoing their feedback from last year, coaches and principals were generally very pleased with the quality and relevance of the bimonthly professional development provided by the state. As shown in Table 3-1, all principals and coaches agreed that the training was relevant to their work, and most agreed that it was high quality. The training also had the rare quality of giving participants adequate opportunities to reflect and interact. In interviews, principals and coaches said this networking was something they valued and hoped could continue in some form, even after the grant ended.

Table 3-1
Coach and Principal Perceptions of Training from the State

The professional development that I received from the state this year…	Percentage Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing	
	Principals	**Coaches**
Was very relevant to my work.	100	100
Consisted of high-quality presentations.	86	94
Included adequate opportunities to reflect and share with my colleagues.	91	100
Was differentiated to meet the needs of different groups, based on their level of pre-existing expertise.	58	61
Was mostly review for me.	31	24

Interviewed coaches and principals also said many—or all—of the meeting topics were useful.

> *Everything has been good. I've enjoyed it all. (Principal)*

> *I'd give the state an A. I know what they offer is cutting edge. They always make trainings user-friendly and we can apply it within our building. They've chosen training and topics that are specific enough to be useful, but broad enough that schools with different programs can use them. (Coach)*

Particularly, cohort 2 principals and coaches cited the following as high quality: CORE leadership training, training related to use of data, and Jo Robinson's training on principal walk-throughs. Cohort 1 principals mentioned many useful training topics as well, including how to use templates, data analysis, comprehension, and study group preparation.

The few interview comments that were less positive concerned the location of meetings (too much travel required for eastern schools) and that some topics were review for a few participants. Additionally, only 58 percent of principals and 61 percent of coaches agreed that professional development was adequately differentiated (Table 3-1). This means that at least one-third were not pleased with the level of differentiation; these respondents were mostly from cohort 2, perhaps reflecting the different levels of previous experience and readiness at the start of their grant.

Training in Coaching Methods

Following the positive finding from last year, the vast majority of coaches were pleased with both the quality (97%) and amount (91%) of training they received in coaching methods. Topics with the steepest reported learning curves in 2005–2006 were: administration and use of assessments, using the core program effectively, student engagement, and coaching methods.

While they learned a lot about coaching methods, interviewed coaches asked for continued, deepened, or even repeated training in this area. Requests included "how to work with people and difficult situations," a recap of the CORE coaching training, and how and when to provide constructive feedback. One coach said, "I feel like I'm an infant in my coaching role" and requested that the state specialist spend more time at her school, helping her grow as a coach.

Many coaches also reported feeling under prepared to work with teacher resistance, even though the topic was addressed at some trainings. While one-half of coaches (52%) agreed that trainings provided them with useful tools for working with resistant staff members, the other half did not agree or were neutral in response. Echoing these findings, many coaches and said that working with teacher resistance was a top area of interest for future training. State project staff members have already responded to this request by scheduling a fall 2006 training on leadership, with a special focus on dealing with resistant teachers.

Other topics coaches mentioned they wanted addressed (or re-addressed) in future professional development included differentiated instruction and selecting and using intervention programs.

Training in Instructional Leadership

Similar to last year, almost all surveyed principals (88%) were pleased with the quality of state-provided training in instructional leadership. In contrast to last year's findings in which some principals felt there was too much Reading First training, this year a small group (19%) from both cohorts believed there was too little training in instructional leadership. Additional training in instructional leadership, such as a "refresher of the CORE training," was a common request for future professional development. As previously mentioned, state project staff members have already planned a 2006 meeting to cover selected leadership topics.

Similar to coaches, principals requested more training in dealing with teacher resistance; only half (45%) agreed that state trainings had provided useful tools for working with resistant staff members.

Related to instructional leadership, most principals (78%) agreed that they had learned useful information about conducting walk-throughs and providing feedback to teachers. However, there were also requests for further training in this area.

> *I want more guidance on how to provide feedback after walk-throughs that is appropriate and has a critical/positive balance. (Principal)*

Professional Development for Teachers

The major state-sponsored training for teachers was the Summer Institute. In addition, there were some opportunities for teachers to attend other state-sponsored trainings, such as the cohort 2 February coach and principal meeting that special education teachers were invited to attend. However, most Reading First professional development for teachers occurred at the school and/or district level, provided by district staff, publisher representatives or other external consultants, or the reading coach.

Teachers' overall perception of professional development. Teachers were fairly positive about the overall professional development they received through Reading First. Almost three-fourths of teachers (71%) agreed that the professional development was sustained and intensive and 79 percent agreed that it focused on what happened in the classroom. They reported learning most about the five components of reading, with fluency at the top of both cohorts' list of areas in which they experienced the most growth. The new cohort (cohort 2) reported much growth in their understanding and use of the core program.

Training from core program representatives. Montana Reading First schools used a variety of core programs which presented a challenge to the state to design and schedule trainings that included them all. For cohort 2, the 2005 Summer Institute provided some training that was specific to the core program. Some schools had additional training in their school or district during the year, while others traveled to national core program trainings. In addition, some of the state reading specialists had expertise in a particular core program (e.g., Open Court) and were able to provide in-school training.

Three-quarters of cohort 1 teachers (79%) and over half of cohort 2 teachers (58%) reported receiving training in the core program from the publisher during the year. For those who received this training, the majority found it usually or always helpful (63%); only seven percent did not find it helpful. Coaches also reported these trainings were fairly useful.

Training from other contracted professional development providers. State project staff members worked with schools or districts to contract with providers who might meet specific professional development needs. For example, independent consultant Carrie Hancock provided additional professional development in DIBELS, Jill Jackson

from CORE provided training in leadership and coaching, and other experts worked with schools on intervention programs such as Corrective Reading and Horizons. About two-thirds of surveyed coaches (62%) indicated that their school received training from contracted experts during the year, usually once or twice. Of the coaches reporting that such training took place, 95 percent indicated that is was usually or always helpful.

Teacher-teacher observations (peer coaching). An additional opportunity for teacher professional development can occur if teachers observe each others' classrooms and dialogue about their observations. The Year 2 evaluation report suggested that some schools were ready for this to happen. This year, however, there was a decrease in the frequency of peer observations; 39 percent of cohort 1 teachers reported observing another classroom at least once during the reading block; a decrease from 53 percent last year.

Professional development from coaches. In the Reading First model, a key aspect of the reading coach role is to provide professional development to the teaching staff. In fact, the role of the coach as professional developer is so important that the federal guidelines for Reading First required the use of coaches "who provide feedback as instructional strategies are put into practice" in state Reading First plans (U.S. Department of Education 2002). Reading coaches are expected to spend the majority of their time modeling lessons, observing classrooms, and providing teachers with constructive feedback that will help improve their instruction. During interviews this year, evaluators delved into the one-on-one coaching experience from the view point of both coaches and teachers. These findings are reported here along with relevant questions from the coach and teacher surveys.

Building trust. For effective coaching to occur, a strong foundation of trust must be established between the teacher and the coach. This trust ensures the teacher that what the coach sees in the classroom will only be used as a tool for teacher growth and development. Several strong themes emerged from interview data about how coaches built trust. Coaches who had worked in the school previously often said they were "already trusted" because their reputations were well-established in the school. For coaches new to the school, some said it was important to "take time to share personal histories and show interest in each person" and to "get to know everyone well."

Maintaining confidentiality was another important contributor to trust between coaches and teachers. Coaches added that it was important to maintain a positive outlook and celebrate successes, whether that meant "giving lots of positive feedback" or "giving out chocolate." They also tried to maintain a separate role from the principal, allowing the administrator to be the evaluator so they could simply "coach."

Interviewed coaches also said it was important to provide teachers with the things they asked for or needed. One coach said that, initially, this meant doing things that fell outside her expected role as a coach, such as helping make photocopies or subbing for an

absent or busy teacher. She added that these "favors" went a long way toward developing trust.

In almost all cases, it was a combination of all or some of the above strategies that helped coaches establish trust with all or most teachers in the building.

> *There are lots of strategies I used to build trust that all took time and could be difficult. Initially, I started out by just being there. I let teachers see me and I was in their classrooms every day without evaluating them. I tried to address their questions in a positive manner and if I didn't know the answer, I'd find out. I took notes all the time so I didn't forget what they asked. Confidentiality is also crucial; I don't talk about teachers outside my job. And I try to celebrate successes with notes or cups of coffee. (Coach)*

Addressing resistance. Coaches were also queried about how they addressed resistance. A very common answer was that the principal got involved in cases of resistance so the coach could maintain the role of "helper" and the principal could be viewed as the "enforcer."

> *I am in charge of the "can't do" teachers and the principal is in charge of the "won't do" teachers. (Coach)*

Another common approach to overcoming resistance was to "be patient" and work "a little at a time." Some coaches explained that this approach worked because the peer pressure from other teachers eventually brought resistant teachers on board. "I let the teachers sell it to each other," said one coach. In other cases, coaches said it just took time to build enough trust with a teacher to change their attitude and/or behavior.

In a few cases, however, coaches said they had been unable to overcome resistance and had opted to avoid the most resistant teachers. One coach admitted that she "wasn't very good" at dealing with resistance. Another said she had completely stopped trying to coach one teacher, although added that the teacher has decided not to return next year. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, dealing with resistance was one of the most-requested topics for future professional development and is a topic planned for a coach and principal meeting in fall 2006.

Teachers' report of coaching. In compliance with federal expectations and consistent with data collected from coaches, almost all of the surveyed teachers reported being observed by their coach at least once during the year (97%), most reported receiving feedback (92%), and three-quarters reported receiving demonstration lessons (78%). (See Table 3-2.)

Table 3-2 also shows that almost all of the teachers received assistance from their coach in interpreting assessment results (97%), providing quality interventions (94%),

monitoring the effectiveness of those interventions (92%), and administering and scoring student assessments (91%).

The slight decline in the occurrence of these coaching activities from 2005 to 2006 is due to the addition of a new, less experienced cohort. For example, 94 percent of cohort 1 teachers reported receiving feedback from their coach, compared to 87 percent of their cohort 2 peers. In other words, new coaches struggled more to provide coaching to all teachers than did their peers with at least three years of coaching experience.

Table 3-2
Types of Support from Coach to Teachers

Type of Support	Percentage of Teachers Who Received This Support	
	2005 (Cohort 1)	2006 (Cohort 1 and 2)
Assistance from the coach in interpreting assessment results	99	97
Observed by coach during the reading block	99	97
Assistance from the coach in providing quality interventions	95	94
Assistance from the coach in monitoring the effectiveness of interventions	92	92
Assistance from the coach in administering and scoring student assessments	96	91
Received feedback on instruction from coach after classroom observation	94	92
Demonstration lessons provided by the reading coach	80	78

These high percentages obscure some important variations, however. While almost all teachers were observed, some (18% in cohort 1 and 13% in cohort 2) were observed quite infrequently, as shown in Figure 3-1. In addition, cohort 2 teachers were much more likely to be observed weekly than their colleagues in cohort 1 (58% and 31% respectively). It may be that cohort 1 coaches focused their observations on the "neediest" teachers in the third year of the grant. Alternatively, they simply may not have spent as much time in the classroom as they did in the first two years of the grant.
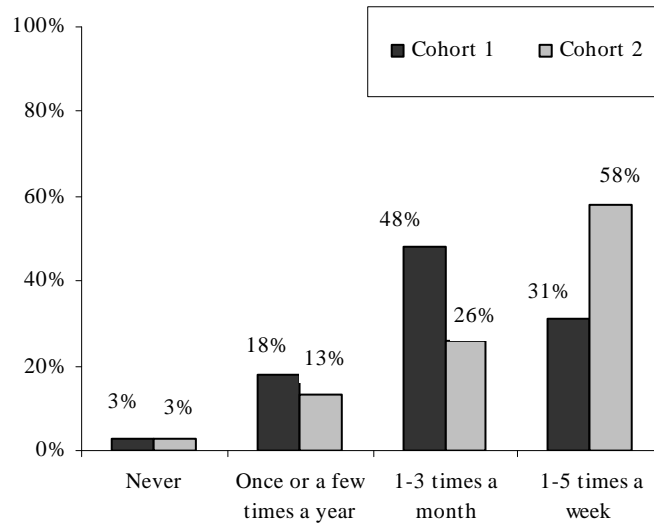
Figure 3-1. Frequency of Coaches' Observations of Teachers

There were also variations at the school level; at eight of the 33 schools, at least 20 percent of teachers said they were never observed or observed only once or a few times a year. These schools were mostly in cohort 1 and included both large and small schools. The figure below shows two fairly large schools that reported very different frequencies of coach observations. While the majority of teachers in School A were observed weekly, the majority of teachers in School B were observed a few times a year or less.
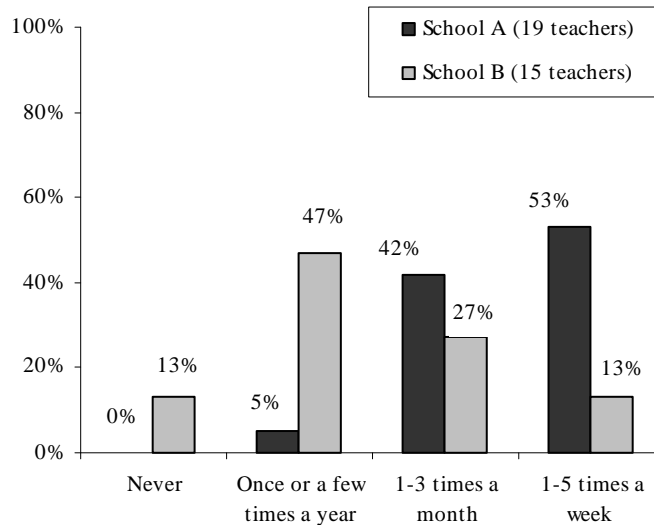
**Figure 3-2. Teacher-reported Frequency of Coach Observations
at Two Contrasting Schools**

Coaches are expected to take what they learn from observations and extend it into "coaching" opportunities where they work one-on-one with teachers on issues particular to their classroom. Of the interviewed teachers, 40 percent reported that they had not worked "one-on-one" with the coach during the year. A common explanation from cohort 1 teachers was that there was "no need" because the "coach has no concerns because I'm doing what she expects to be seeing." Another teacher said, "I know more about teaching kindergarten than the coach," adding that the coach, "Is not completely comfortable in the coaching role."

Two less frequent reasons teachers reported for not working with the coach were that the coach did not have a positive relationship with teachers, or that the coach was busy with other administrative tasks. "She walks through our classroom during the reading block, but mostly is doing administrative things," said one teacher. (Time spent on coaching activities compared to other tasks is discussed in Chapter 4.)

While some teachers had never worked one-on-one with the coach, all interviewed coaches provided examples of working with a teacher over time. In some cases, coaching was very sustained and systematic, as a coach describes in the example below.

> *I worked with one teacher intensely over several weeks. First, I observed two full 90-minute periods while taking detailed notes. We talked about my notes and the things the teacher needed to work on. Then, I went in and modeled how to do a lesson from the core program while staying engaged with the students. I stayed in the classroom for another week and a half after modeling, observing and providing feedback. I also helped the teacher learn more about using assessments. (Coach)*

Identifying teachers and the focus of coaching. One of the possible reasons why some teachers received more one-on-one coaching and/or observations than others came from responses to a question about how coaches selected teachers to work with. In cohort 1, the majority of interviewed coaches said they were either able to work with all teachers, or they focused the majority of their time on teachers who were new to the building.

> *At first I went to all teachers in 30-minute rotations, but it became obvious that some required far less help than others so my major work was with new teachers who were fresh out of college. (Coach)*

In contrast, coaches in their first year on the job in cohort 2 were most likely to work with teachers who asked for help or were the "most receptive."

> *I work most with the teachers who are most receptive and will come to me and ask questions or invite me into their classroom. I let them pick me; I wait until they're ready. I try not to force myself on them. But I do make it into everyone's room. (Coach)*

A few coaches, but definitely the minority, said they chose who to work with based on student data or data from their own observations ("I use DIBELS scores and the amount of children I see engaged within a lesson"). Teachers, however, were more likely to say that their work was based on things coaches saw in their classroom during observations.

When asked for examples of topics they worked on in coaching sessions, the majority of interviewed coaches said they helped teachers with learning to teach the core program, templates, and follow the lesson maps. Some coaches mentioned working on specific strategies such as partner reading, think-alouds, or classroom management.

Feedback from one-on-one coaching. An important aspect of coaching is to provide teachers with useful, constructive feedback after observations. Most surveyed teachers (92%) reported that they received feedback at least once during the year. While one in five teachers (21%) received weekly or daily feedback, most received feedback one to three times a month (49%) or once or a few times a year (22%) as shown in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3
Frequency of Coaches' Observations to Teachers

	Percentage of Teachers			
	Never	Once or a few times a year	1-3 times a month	Once a week or more
This year, how often did the reading coach provide you with feedback on your instruction after an observation?	8	22	49	21

Interviewed teachers described the feedback they received from the coach. Many coaches combined verbal feedback with written notes or journals.

> *The coach writes in a journal after every observation and we can journal back. Recently she wrote an entry that included "Good vocabulary development today" and also posed the question, "Student A was about one second behind during the entire lesson, is that usual?" (Teacher)*

Teachers who received verbal feedback were evenly split between those who received feedback fairly informally ("We talk about it in the hallway") and those who had more formal meetings with the coach.

> *Right away we meet in the coach's office to talk about a student during the observation. She might ask me, "Have you thought about trying it this way" or ask about testing. (Teacher)*

A few interviewed teachers said they never received follow-up from the coach. Another small group of teachers said follow-up was usually generalized for grade-level discussions.

Teachers' perception of coaching. Surveyed and interviewed teachers were positive about the assistance they received from their coach. The majority (ranging from 79% to 88%) indicated the support they got from their coach on a variety of items (such as feedback after an observation; demonstration lessons; administering, scoring, and interpreting student assessments; and providing and monitoring interventions) was usually or always helpful. Likewise, the majority of teachers (80%) agreed that coaches were their ally (even when providing critical feedback) and 85 percent agreed that their reading coach was a knowledgeable resource about reading research and practice.

These positive findings were confirmed in interviews; the majority of interviewed teachers said their coach had a positive influence on their teaching. Teachers described the impact in the following ways:

- The coach taught teachers new strategies to implement (e.g., how to use templates or increase student engagement)

- The coach served as a "sounding board" for teachers to discuss new ideas or share frustrations

- The coach "kept teachers on their toes" making teachers "less lazy" or "more encouraged"

The coach helps me look at other methods and strategies for each individual child so they don't fall through the cracks. It is nice to have someone with different ideas; the coach makes me think about what I'm doing and gives me suggestions I haven't thought of before. (Teacher)

You don't get lazy when the coach comes through. She makes sure we are on top of things and always tries to make us better teachers. Whatever she learns at meetings she shares with us. (Teacher)

There were a handful of interviewed teachers who did not feel that their coach helped improve their instruction. At one school, the teachers expressed disappointment:

At the beginning of the grant we envisioned a coach who would have more direct feedback to me in my room. But her impact has been on macro-level issues instead of pedagogy. Overall, there is a gap between what the coach is doing and what we thought she would do. (Teacher)

Study Groups

Another type of required professional development was study groups. State project staff members assigned study group readings (e.g., <u>Overcoming Dyslexia</u>, videos from Reid Lyon) and gave schools specific questions to complete in relation to each topic. Coaches were responsible for facilitating and documenting study groups.

Most schools held at least three study groups during the year with some holding as many as seven or more (see Table 3-4). Almost all teachers (94%) reported attending at least one study group during the year.

Table 3-4
Number of Study Groups Held During 2005–2006

	Percentage of Schools as Reported by Coaches	
	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
1 or 2	20	8
3 or 4	45	58
5 or 6	10	25
7 or more	25	8

In 2005, the evaluation found that teachers were very mixed about the usefulness of study groups; only half agreed that they were a good use of their time. This year, perceptions of the usefulness of study groups improved by nine percentage points among cohort 1 teachers; 63 percent found them a good use of their time (see Table 3-5). One explanation for the increased enthusiasm for study groups in cohort 1 is the book selection; interviewed coaches almost unanimously declared <u>Overcoming Dyslexia</u> to be "really interesting" resulting in "a true understanding of struggling readers." One coach said, "Every single discussion about that book has been outstanding."

Table 3-5
Perceptions of Study Groups

Regularly attending study groups is a good use of my time.	Percentage Agreeing	
	Cohort 1 (Change from 2005)	Cohort 2
Teachers	63 (+9)	46
Principals	88 (-1)	67

Table 3-5 also shows that a smaller percentage of cohort 2 than cohort 1 teachers (46%) agreed that study groups were worthwhile. In addition, a lower percentage of cohort 2

principals (67%) than cohort 1 (88%) agreed. One cohort 2 coach explained that the environment was still "too tense" for effective discussions. Another cohort 2 school felt the selections were too basic for their teachers who were ready to jump into more advanced readings. In contrast, study groups were given high marks in other cohort 2 schools; one coach said they were useful ways to "get us all on the same page."

While a few coaches mentioned that they had some flexibility in running study groups, there were requests from both cohorts for more freedom to choose books and articles that best met the needs of the school.

> *I'd love a suggested reading list with choices within it. I appreciate that the state decides what is good or bad, but we're ready for a little more choice. (Coach)*

> *If we were given some freedom to conduct the study groups however we want, we'd run with it. Our teachers want meaty topics. (Coach)*

Knowledge Box

A requirement of all Montana Reading First schools was the purchase of Knowledge Box, a digital learning software system that delivers media via the Internet directly to the classroom or computer lab. Knowledge Box was intended to serve as a central vehicle for shared lesson planning and as a digital library of videotaped professional development offerings. Schools were expected to download materials (videos, handouts, etc.) for study groups, professional development, and lesson planning. In 2005, the evaluation reported mixed reactions to Knowledge Box and recommended increasing its utility and content in Year 3.

In 2005–2006, most teachers (84%) reported watching or using Knowledge Box at least once during the school year, although almost half (45%) did so only once or a few times. Interviewed coaches said that their schools most commonly used Knowledge Box for DIBELS training, study groups, template practice, and to get new teachers "up to speed." For these purposes, most coaches said it was a valuable tool.

> *Knowledge Box is amazing. It is a valuable tool for individual teachers to use with individual students and as a training tool for new teachers who need to catch up with the rest of us. (Coach)*

> *It is an especially valuable resource for templates and study groups. (Coach)*

Only a few schools mentioned using lesson planning or in-classroom components. A common theme from interviews was that Knowledge Box "had potential" if only it was used more frequently.

> *It has the potential to be a valuable tool, but we haven't used it. (Coach)*

There is a lot of power to Knowledge Box, but we've used it on a limited basis. (Coach)

Teachers' opinions of the usefulness of Knowledge Box improved among cohort 1 teachers during 2005–2006 (see Table 3-6). For example, 13 percent of teachers did not find Knowledge Box helpful, compared to twice as many the year before (28%).

Table 3-6
Opinions of Knowledge Box

	Percent of Teachers		
	2005 **Cohort 1**	**2006** **Cohort 1**	**2006** **Cohort 2**
Training segments that you watched on Knowledge Box were <u>usually</u> or <u>always</u> helpful.	41	53	44
Training segments that you watched on Knowledge Box were <u>rarely</u> or <u>never</u> helpful.	28	13	23

Overall, however, both survey and interview data show coaches, principals, and teachers remained divided about the usefulness of Knowledge Box. For example, less than one-half of coaches (40%) agreed that Knowledge Box was an effective vehicle for delivering training and materials. Dissatisfaction was more pronounced in cohort 2 where some schools had major time delays in installation (e.g., April instead of September). Both cohorts continued to report major technical difficulties.

It could be an amazing tool if it would just work. My feeling is that for $45,000 we didn't get our money out of it. (Coach)

OPI had done a good job of getting good speakers and video clips for Knowledge Box, but we haven't been able to access any of it and it is already March. (Coach)

Teacher-requested Professional Development Topics

Surveyed teachers wanted more training in many areas. The top areas of interest were using intervention programs effectively and differentiated instruction. Other frequent requests were for training in teaching reading comprehension and increasing student engagement. Some cohort 2 teachers wanted more training in areas related to assessment.

Support and Technical Assistance from the State

State project staff members include a program director, four state reading specialists, and a program assistant. The specialists' job involves spending the majority of their time in the field, visiting each of their assigned schools at least once a month. Reading specialists must provide detailed written reports and feedback to schools, including scoring them on their RIP. They also provide supports to schools during their visits that range from setting up assessment systems to locating resources and providing training. This technical assistance is tailored to each individual school based on participants; expressed needs as well as data from assessments and the RIP. Increasingly, state reading specialists have provided statewide training for teachers, principals, and coaches.

Indeed, specialists spent many days in the field; coaches reported that two-thirds of schools (67%) received at least four visits from their specialist. Data from the state project director indicate that this estimate was low; all schools received at least four visits from specialists and some received as many as 20. Of the 30 percent of coaches that received two or fewer visits, one-half said this frequency was inadequate. Regardless of frequency, the vast majority of coaches (94%) reported that visits from their specialist were usually or always helpful.

Overall satisfaction with assistance from state project staff members, already high last year, increased this year, as shown in Table 3-7. For example, support from the specialists was seen as valuable by most, although not all principals (74%) and coaches (80%).

Table 3-7
Coach and Principals' Perceptions of State Reading Specialists

	Percentage Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing (Percentage change from last year)	
	Principals	**Coaches**
The OPI Reading First specialist's support and input has been extremely valuable.	74 (+9)	80 (+13)
I trust our OPI Reading First specialist with any information—good or bad—about our reading program.	83 (+3)	85 (+12)
Our OPI Reading First specialist understands our school, our programs and cultures, and takes that into account when making recommendations.	85 (-9)	80 (+7)

Interview data confirmed these findings. All but one interviewed coach had nothing but extremely positive comments about the helpfulness of their state reading specialist, calling them "invaluable," "responsive," and "very helpful."

> *I feel fortunate to have our specialist. She is easy to work with and I feel comfortable asking her anything. I e-mail her all the time and she gets right back to me. (Coach)*

> *They've been helpful in the aspect of professional development they give at coaches meetings and have been helpful to reinforce the goals of Reading First with everyone. They help me get data and if I have specific problems they give me information. (Coach)*

Overall, principals and coaches believed that state project staff members were responsive to their schools' needs (84% and 90% agreed, respectively). Most interviewed principals were pleased with the overall package of support from the state, describing staff as "responsive" and "clear in expectations." While there were some grumblings over budget problems early in the year, these were taken care of for the most part. Several principals described how state staff members made special trips to their district to address concerns raised about budget management or grant implementation.

While the majority of schools were very satisfied, a few schools did not have as positive of relationships with state staff and were unhappy with the lack of responsiveness to their needs, according to interviews.

Schools also seemed more satisfied with the required RIP, which was revised (shortened) for the 2005–2006 year. A corresponding RIP Action Plan was also developed and used frequently by state reading specialists in their work with schools. While the 2005 evaluation found that only 35 percent of coaches and 45 percent of principals agreed that the RIP was a valuable planning tool, this year the majority of survey respondents, especially principals, felt the Action Plan provided valuable guidance to the implementation of the grant (Table 3-8). About two-thirds of survey respondents believed the RIP provided an accurate picture of implementation at their school.

Table 3-8
Usefulness of the Reading Improvement Plan Checklist and Action Plan

	Percent Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing		
	Principals	Coaches	Teachers
The RIP Checklist provides an accurate picture of implementation at our school.	67	66	60
The RIP Action Plan has provided valuable guidance to our implementation of Reading First.	83	59	58

State Support for Districts

Districts were also pleased, overall, with the expectations from the state and the corresponding support to meet those expectations. Specifically:

- 90 percent of district coordinators agreed that the state had done a good job communicating Reading First information

- 80 percent agreed that expectations for district involvement were clear

- 70 percent agreed that state project staff were responsive to districts' needs

Additionally, all district coordinators who had met with state reading specialists found these meetings useful. However, state-sponsored meetings for district coordinators were attended by only one-half of surveyed coordinators and received mixed reviews.

Chapter Four:
Leadership and School-level Structures

Chapter Four presents information related to instructional leadership and the structures and systems that bring about comprehensive and sustained institutional change. The chapter begins with an examination of district and principal leadership, followed by the role of the reading coach. It then discusses meetings and collaboration in schools and the level of buy-in to the Reading First model. Assessment systems, including administration of assessments and use of data, are presented before a final discussion of issues related to sustainability.

District Support

The 33 Montana Reading First schools are located in 24 school districts. Some of these districts are very small and may have only one school with a principal who also serves as superintendent. In contrast, the largest district has over 20 elementary schools. The larger districts are expected to assign a district-level administrator to support grant implementation. According to the Reading Improvement Plan (RIP), districts must also provide sufficient funding, guidance, professional development, and staffing to Reading First schools, as well as make the success of students in K–3 reading a major part of elementary principal evaluations. Finally, districts must create data-driven action plans to respond to identified problems.

Following the expectations of the RIP, many surveyed district coordinators reported that districts provided an array of supports to Reading First schools such as supporting the core program and interventions, providing grant management and curriculum guidance, and analyzing data (Table 4-1). There were some minor differences between very small districts and their larger counterparts in the provision of these supports.

Table 4-1
District Coordinators' Views of District Support

In which ways has your district supported Reading First?	Percent of Districts with One School	Percent of Districts with More than One School
By providing professional development that is aligned with Reading First	75	83
By having a district staff member designated as the Reading First "go-to" person (district-level coordinator, representative)	75	83
By providing overall curriculum guidance	75	100
By assisting with proposal writing	75	83
By providing technical assistance to support school change	75	67
By providing grant management	75	83
By supporting the core reading program	100	100
By analyzing reading first assessment data	100	83
By educating and galvanizing the community	75	67

Principals were somewhat less likely to report receiving all of these supports from their district. The type of district support most frequently mentioned by interviewed principals related to budgets and the financial aspects of grant management. As one principal put it:

The superintendent is looking more at dollars and cents. (Principal)

Regardless of the types of support the district provided, the majority of principals (87%) reported that their district was supportive of Reading First, either actively or in a "hands-off" manner (Table 4-2). However, a small group of principals (7%) felt their district was overly involved, while six percent felt their district was uninvolved or unsupportive of the grant. These data were corroborated by district surveys; while 70 percent of district coordinators agreed that their district strongly supported the instructional changes under Reading First; 30 percent disagreed or were neutral in their response.

Table 4-2
Principals' Perception of District Support for Reading First

In your view, which of the following best describes your district's level of support for Reading First.	Percentage of Principals
Highly directive, perhaps overly involved	7
Very supportive and appropriately involved	61
Supportive but "hands-off"	26
Not involved but not in opposition	3
Not supportive and opposed to or skeptical of Reading First	3

In interviews, a few principals mentioned that their district office personnel saw their involvement in the grant as primarily financial, without expectations to attend meetings or be otherwise actively involved. This may explain the schools who felt their district was supportive but "hands-off."

Influence on Non-Reading First Schools

One expectation of districts that accept Reading First funds is that the curricular benefits of the program be extended to non-Reading First programs. The majority of surveyed district coordinators (84%) in districts with more than one school agreed that Reading First greatly influenced non-Reading First schools. Approximately two-thirds (67%) of the district coordinators agreed that there was no tension between Reading First and non-Reading First programs.

In districts with more than one elementary school, district coordinators reported that some of the Reading First components were present in some or all of their non-Reading First schools. Most commonly, those schools provided high-quality professional development in reading, had systematic interventions and assessment systems, and a 90-minute reading block. Conversely, few districts reported having a reading coach or using the same core program in non-Reading First schools.

Principal Leadership

In the Reading First model, principals are asked to move beyond their role of building manager to become an "instructional leader." This includes modeling a high level of support for Reading First, being actively involved in Reading First activities, serving as a knowledgeable resource about reading and school change, observing in the classroom, and helping teachers make instructional improvements.

In the 2005–2006 school year, four Reading First principals were first-year administrators, and an additional two principals were new to their schools. Principals had an average of eight years of administrative experience and had been in the same school for an average of five years.

State Expectations for Principal

State expectations for Reading First principals are contained in the RIP. These expectations include:

1. Lead a Reading Leadership Team (RLT), attend grade-level meetings and participate in staff training

2. Conduct walk-throughs and provide feedback to teachers

3. Provide support for scientifically-based reading research (SBRR)

4. Ensure the maintenance of a data system and lead staff in data driven instruction

Lead RLT, attend grade-level meetings, and participate in staff training. Principals were expected to attend and provide leadership at all RLT meetings and attend at least 75 percent of all grade-level meetings. While all principals reported attending at least some RLT and grade-level meetings, the frequency of attendance decreased from last year. Specifically:

- Three-fourths of principals (74%) attended RLT meetings at least monthly, down from 85 percent last year.

- Sixty percent of principals attended grade-level meetings at least *twice* a month, a decrease from 70 percent last year.

- Most of the decrease in frequency was among cohort 1 principals; only 26 percent reported attending grade-level meetings *weekly*, compared to 57 percent of principals from cohort 2.

These results suggest that as cohort 1 principals concluded the final year of their grant they may have re-prioritized their commitments to be more consistent with traditional uses of their time. Two principal comments raise the issue of non-Reading First demands on their time:

> *Attending reading related meetings is a great goal but not always possible because of district required meetings. (Principal)*

I get pulled away a lot so there are some times I can't spend in reading
related meetings because it depends on the crisis of the day. (Principal)

Conduct walk-throughs and provide feedback. An important element of the role of principals as instructional leaders is making frequent observations in classrooms and providing teachers with feedback about their instruction. Many principals were in classrooms regularly; they reported spending an average of 148 minutes a week observing teachers (about a half an hour per day) and 49 minutes a week providing feedback.

Teachers confirmed that, indeed, principals were in classrooms quite frequently. The majority of teachers reported weekly observations by their principal (63% in cohort 1 and 58% in cohort 2, as shown in Figure 4-1). While only one percent of teachers said they were never observed, a small group of teachers (about 13%) reported being observed once or a few times a year. For the most part, observations occurred fairly regularly at most schools, but there were five schools in which the principal did not make it to the majority of teachers' classrooms more than a once or a few times a year. Overall, cohort 1 teachers reported more frequent observations than cohort 2 teachers.
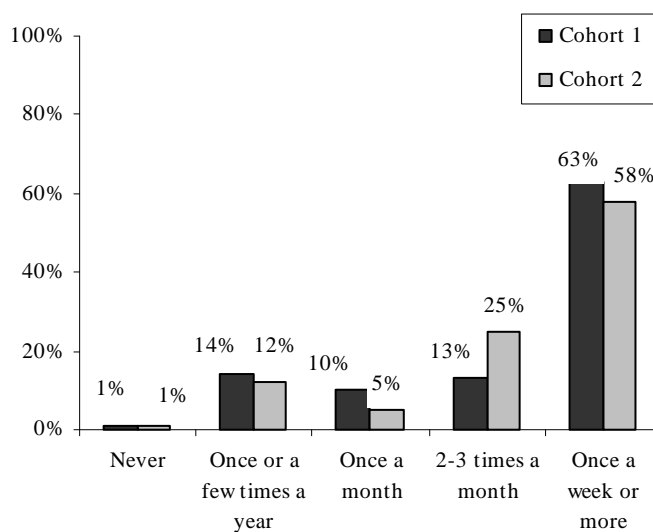
Figure 4-1. Teachers' Report of Frequency of Observations by Principal

Principals were fairly uniform in response when asked what they did during classroom observations; they used a short protocol which listed priority items as a guide for what to look for when visiting classrooms. Teacher pacing and student engagement were the characteristics that principals looked at most frequently.

Principals said they struggled with their time commitments in relation to walk-throughs; when asked what expectations were the most difficult to fulfill, principals tended to point to time spent in the classroom.

> *Trying to get walk-throughs in is tough some days. Meetings and all aren't too big a problem. (Principal)*

> *Sometimes the state forgets that we are wearing multiple hats and can't be everywhere. (Principal)*

After observations, principals sometimes provided feedback to teachers. While some teachers received at least weekly feedback (24% in cohort 1 and 13% in cohort 2), it was more common for feedback to be monthly or a few times a year. There was also a group of teachers (11% in cohort 1 and 24% in cohort 2) who said they never received feedback from their principal; most of these teachers were from 11 of the 33 schools. Frequency of principal feedback is shown in Figure 4-2.
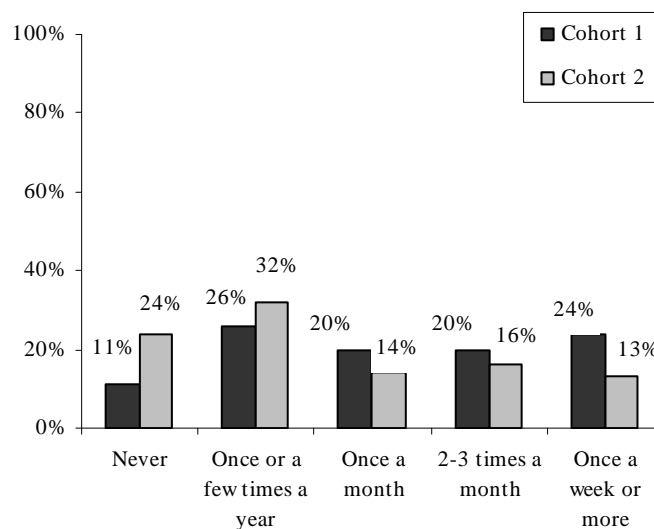
Figure 4-2. Teacher-Reported Frequency of Constructive Principal Feedback

Of those teachers who received feedback, 70 percent reported that it was usually or always helpful. An additional 17 percent found it sometimes helpful, while 12 percent of teachers indicated the feedback from principals was never or rarely helpful.

Even though most teachers usually found principal feedback helpful, not all believed that principals should be so directly involved in matters of instruction. About one in four teachers, as well as coaches, from both cohorts agreed that principal involvement in

instruction was excessive. Furthermore, a third of cohort 2 principals had doubts about the appropriateness of their involvement in instructional matters; cohort 2 principals were three times as likely as cohort 1 principals to believe that their involvement in instructional matters was excessive (33% versus 11%). The cohort 2 findings were similar to the responses of cohort 1 principals last year (30% agreed), suggesting that over time these principals came to expect and agree with the instructional leadership expectations.

Percentage Agreeing That "RF puts excessive emphasis on principal involvement in instruction"
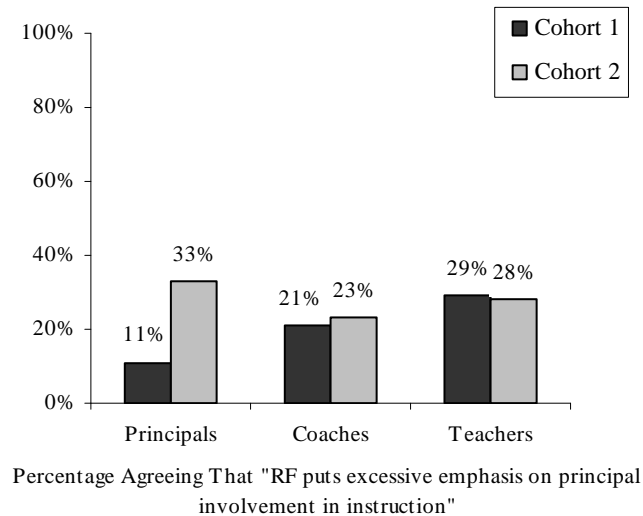
Figure 4-3. Perceptions of Principal Involvement in Instruction

Provide support for Scientifically Based Reading Research. In interviews, this particular responsibility was mentioned especially frequently, often couched in terms of ensuring that the core reading program was implemented with fidelity. A typical comment was:

> *My responsibilities are to make sure there is fidelity to the program, keep a finger on the pulse, do walk-throughs and make sure they're following the Reading First program. (Principal)*

Ensure the maintenance of a data system and lead staff in data driven instruction.
Evidence presented later in this chapter suggests that data systems are firmly established in most schools and principals look at data regularly. This year the state provided a special training for cohort 2 principals to prepare them to lead a meeting to analyze student data, an expectation previously established in cohort 1 schools.

Provide visible leadership and advocacy. In addition to the specific components mentioned by the RIP, another indicator of principal leadership is the degree to which

they are visible advocates for Reading First. A high percentage of teachers (84%) and coaches (88%) agreed that their principal was a visible advocate for reading.

Reading Coach

Chapter Three summarized data related to the many forms of professional development coaches provided to teachers. In addition to this teacher- and classroom-centered focus, coaches faced a long list of other roles and responsibilities. These responsibilities included overseeing assessments, assisting with interventions and supplemental instruction, documenting Reading First activities, and attending trainings.

In previous years, the evaluation has consistently found that many coaches work very long hours and carry a wide range of responsibilities. Full-time coaches reported working an average of 47 hours per week on Reading First, with a range from 33 to 60 hours. This year, the evaluation asked coaches to report in more detail about the amount of time they spent per week in their coaching job and on 16 different activities which could be collapsed into four areas of work. Figure 4-4 shows that, on average, coaches spent equal amounts of time on coaching (25%) and assessment (27%) duties. The remaining half of their week was spent on other activities, including a portion (14%) on interventions.
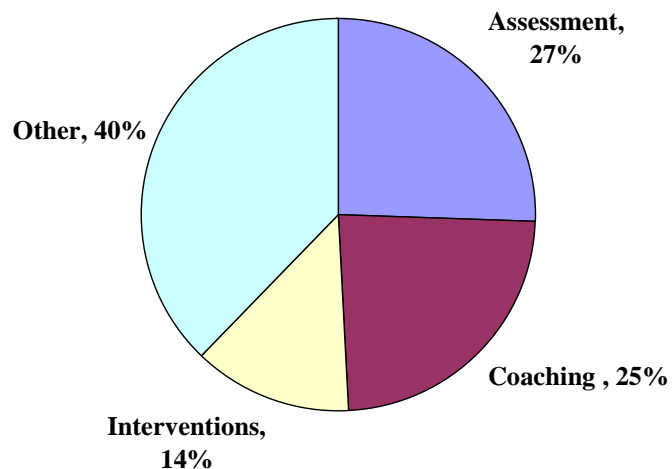
Figure 4-4. Average Percentage of Time Coaches Spend in Four Areas

While the figure above shows the average amount of time in each category, there was wide variation among coaches in the percentage of time spent on various activities. For example, some coaches spent as much as 31 percent of their time coordinating or administering assessments, while others reported they spent little or no time on this activity. In another example, some coaches spent as much as 33 percent of their time providing one-on-one coaching to K–3 teachers; far above the average of 13 percent. On the other hand, a few coaches reported spending less than five percent of their week providing one-on-one coaching.

The "other" activities that took up an average of 40 percent of a coaches' week are also detailed in Table 4-3. Much of this "other" time was spent planning for meetings and completing paperwork. Again, there was wide variation in responses; one coach worked as much as one-third of the week with teachers in grades four through six, another spent one-fifth of her week on paperwork.

Table 4-3
Coaches' Report of Time Spent on Various Tasks

		Average Percentage of Time Spent by Coaches	Maximum Percentage of Time* Reported (Standard Deviation)
Coaching 25%	One-on-one coaching (observing, demonstrating, or providing feedback to individual K–3 teachers)	13	33 (8)
	Training groups of K–3 teachers	4	11 (3)
	Attending meetings (e.g., grade-level)	7	15 (3)
Assessment 27%	Entering, managing, & using assessment data	16	42 (9)
	Coordinating or administering reading assessments	11	31 (7)
Interventions 14%	Planning for interventions	6	16 (4)
	Providing interventions directly to students	8	32 (9)
Other 40%	Planning for meetings	13	5 (3)
	Paperwork	10	19 (5)
	Attending professional development	4	18 (3)
	Working with teachers in grades 4–6	5	31 (7)
	Other (subbing, bus or recess duty, or other miscellaneous)	8	43 (13)

*The minimum in each example was zero.
Note: Total is more than 100 percent due to rounding.

Both last year and this year, cohort 1 coaches believed that their role was clearly defined and that teachers understood the role of the coach (Table 4-4). In contrast, cohort 2 teachers and coaches expressed less clarity about the role of the coach at the end of their first year of implementation. There were also differences between the cohorts in the percentage of coaches who agreed that they worked effectively with the principal on the grant (84% vs. 69%).

Table 4-4
Coaches' Perceptions of Their Roles and Relationships

	Percentage of Coaches Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing		
	Cohort 1		Cohort 2
	2005	2006	2006
My role as the reading coach is clearly defined.	90	90	62
Most teachers at my school understand the role of the reading coach.	95	95	69
The principal and I work together effectively on Reading First	80	84	69

Although the role of the coach was clear in many cases, some coaches said they struggled to meet some of the grant expectations. In particular, some coaches from very small schools found themselves confronted with additional responsibilities that took them away from their coaching work.

> *Because we are a small school, I do lots of the tutoring. I do subbing when teachers are gone. (Coach)*

> *Everything falls on me, including scheduling and scrambling, changing grouping, and training paraprofessionals. (Coach)*

Reading Leadership Team

All Montana Reading First schools are required to have a Reading Leadership Team (RLT) whose members represent the K–3 staff. The team is supposed to meet once a month and is responsible for providing leadership by prioritizing and focusing on program goals, coordinating Reading First activities, implementing the school's intervention programs, and working with the RIP.

Coaches described RLT meetings as having a more general focus than grade-level meetings:

> *The RLT talks about: are interventions effective, how are people using their classroom library, data for all grade levels, how to improve grade level meetings, how to improve schoolwide motivation. (Coach)*

> *Grade-level meetings specifically talk about data for specific students and do a lot of discussion about intensive interventions for those students. RLT meetings are more general; we talk about whole school's data and data in relation to Reading First. (Coach)*

Data indicate that all but one school had a RLT that was responsible for some grant leadership activities. In 2005–2006:

- Membership, according to surveyed coaches, usually represented the entire staff, including the principal, coach, K–3 teachers, special education, and Title I teachers.

- Most RLTs (76%) met at least monthly; 18 percent met every other month, and the remaining six percent met less frequently.

- The focus of many RLT meetings, according to teacher members, was the review of data and sharing/receiving information from the state or from their peers about reading. Many teams also shared reading research at the meetings. RLTs were less likely to make decisions about material purchases, instruction, or to plan for sustainability of the grant.

- Generally, feedback about RLTs was positive. Meetings were viewed as "a good use of time" by 83 percent of principals, 78 percent of coaches, and 66 percent of teachers who were members.

- Most principals, coaches, and teacher members reported feeling welcomed at RLT meetings, and the majority also agreed that they discussed the reasons behind doing this.

Buy-in

Education reform efforts require those involved to have effective communication and collaboration or "buy into" the reform. Buy-in, which was fairly high at the beginning of the grant, remained strong in many cases. However, there was an overall decline among teachers in support of the instructional practices promoted by the grant as shown. Specifically:

- Coaches and principals from both cohorts strongly supported Reading First; 97 percent supported the instructional changes occurring under the grant and were pleased that their school had the grant.

- Two-thirds of cohort 1 teachers (68%) strongly supported the instructional changes occurring under Reading First. This represented a decrease from 76 percent in 2005 (Figure 4-5).

- While 85 percent of cohort 2 teachers strongly supported the instructional changes when surveyed at the beginning of the grant, the percent dropped to 56 percent in agreement by the end of their first year of implementation.

Percentage of Teachers Agreeing, "I strongly support the instructional changes occuring under Reading First."
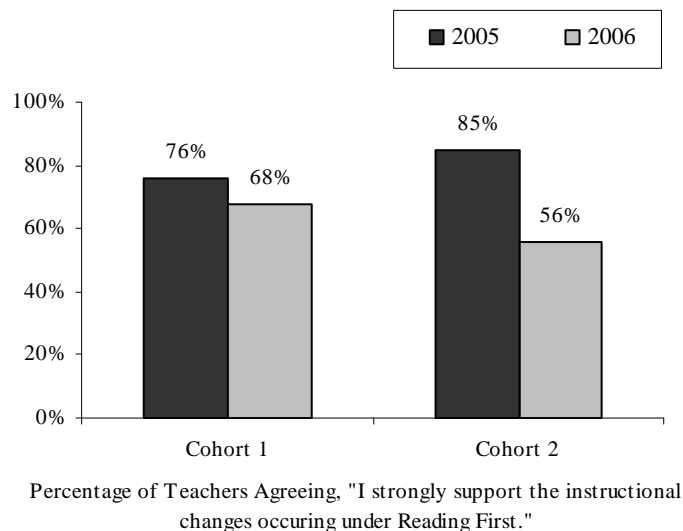
Figure 4-5. Support for Reading First

Other data contradict the findings presented above. For example, the majority of interviewed principals and coaches categorized buy-in as "high" in their school.

> *Our school saw the results and how the new program affected every child which made us go from moderate to high support of the grant. (Principal)*

> *In the last two years, our teachers have seen us move kids. Every year we are tightening instruction and we see success…it is amazing. (Coach)*

The few interviewees who categorized buy-in as "medium" pointed to a group of teachers who did not want to "let go of their old ways" or "had difficulty adjusting to change." This remained an issue in several cohort 1 schools even after three years of implementation. In some schools, teachers have chosen to retire or transfer.

Other survey data also paint a mixed picture; while a small group of teachers (20%) reported significant philosophical or pedagogical objections to Reading First, only six percent agreed that they would go back to their "old ways" of teaching after the grant ended. Additionally, only eight percent of teachers disagreed with statement "I am pleased that our school has a Reading First grant."

Communication and Collaboration

A central component of Reading First is that each school will implement procedures that facilitate communication and collaboration about reading instruction and student progress. These opportunities include regular grade-level meetings, RLT meetings, staff meetings, study groups, and celebrations of success. These opportunities should provide multiple opportunities for staff members to communicate about reading research and assessment data, instructional practices, core and intervention materials, and student achievement.

Data reveal that there were varied and frequent opportunities for staff members to communicate about reading instruction and their students. Three-fourths of teachers from all schools (78%) felt that Reading First had helped their school develop a more collaborative culture, a rating similar to 2004–2005 (77%). Eighty-eight percent of principals and coaches this school year agreed with teachers.

The majority of interviewed coaches and principals said reading conversations took place during grade-level meetings, although other places such as staff meetings or informal places were common as well.

> *I carpool with three other teachers and at least three days a week conversations in the car are about reading. (Coach)*

Coaches reported that grade-level meetings were designed to discuss data, make decisions about grouping and interventions for students, discuss individual students' needs, and provide a place for teachers to share problems and solutions. These meetings occurred frequently; almost all teachers (94%) reported that they attended a grade-level meeting at least once a month (Table 4-5), similar to findings last year.

Table 4-5
Frequency of Grade-level Meetings

This year, how often did you attend a grade-level meeting?	Percentage of Teachers				
	Never	Once or a few times/ year	Once a month	2-3 times a month	At least once a week
2005 (Cohort 1)	1	3	18	42	37
2006 (Cohort 1 and 2)	2	4	17	44	33

The majority of survey respondents also agreed that regularly attending grade-level meetings was a good use of their time. Agreement was highest among coaches and

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cohort 1 principals. In contrast, cohort 2 principals had lower agreement, suggesting room for continued improvement in the content, utility, and/or format of the meetings.

Percentage Agreeing, "Regularly attending grade-level meetings is a good use of my time"
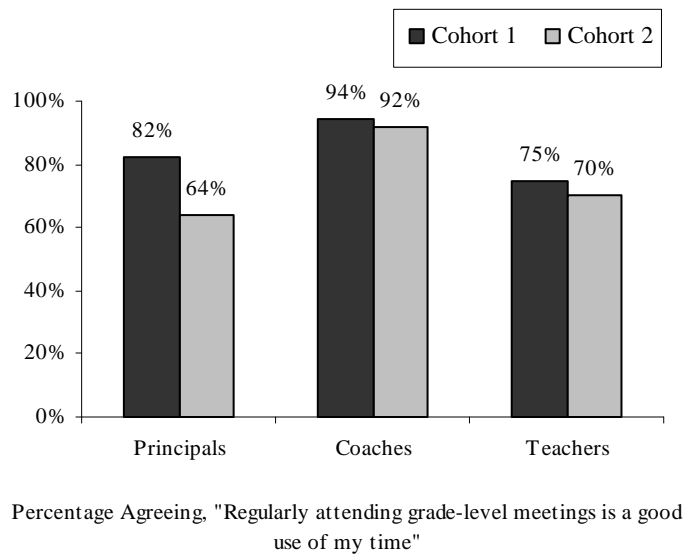
Figure 4-6. Perceived Usefulness of Grade-level Reading Meetings

The depth of teacher conversations about data and student progress is an important indicator of the quality of communication and collaboration. Principals and coaches were asked to rate the quality of their teachers' conversations on a spectrum from "what and when" to "how and why." A wide range of opinions were expressed during interviews.

Many principals and coaches, especially in cohort 1, said their teachers' conversations were thoughtful and collaboration was strong.

> *Communication is extremely thoughtful. They stress how and why; they're data driven. (Principal)*

> *Teachers have lost the desire to have isolated classrooms. They are very supportive of each other and know each other's strengths and weaknesses. (Coach)*

Other principals and coaches rated their teachers' conversations as somewhere in the middle of the spectrum or moving in a positive direction.

> *Not everyone is there, but 70-75 percent are very thoughtful depending on the grade level. (Principal)*

It's in the middle, moving towards the how and why. I saw this start to happen when they saw the data; I started to hear, 'How can we move that kid along?' and 'What can we do?' (Coach)

However, there was ample room for improvement in the quality and depth of conversations in a handful of schools, especially those in cohort 2.

Without help from the coach, conversations are very much on the surface level or aren't happening at all. (Coach)

My staff made progress, but had not made the leap to connect data and instruction. (Principal)

Assessment and Data Systems

Assessment data form a key part of the new schoolwide reading programs being implemented under Reading First. Assessment data are used to guide a wide range of decisions, including how to group students, how much time to spend on a given exercise, and which students should receive interventions.

In Montana Reading First, all schools are required to use the DIBELS assessment as a benchmark measure three times a year (fall, winter, and spring). In addition to the DIBELS which was commonly used for screening and progress-monitoring, many schools used data from other reading assessments (Table 4-6). Assessments from the core reading programs, as well as Fox in a Box, were common tools.

Table 4-6
Assessments Used by Type

	Percent of Coaches Reporting Use					
	DIBELS	Fox in a Box	Core Reading Program Assessments	Teacher Developed	Other	I don't know
Screening	97	6	55	15	21	3
Diagnosis	49	46	85	18	36	3
Progress-monitoring	100	3	64	21	12	3

Assessment Teams, Training, and Consistency

Benchmark assessments are the responsibility of trained assessment teams; teachers may not administer benchmark assessments to their own students, although teachers may administer progress monitoring assessments. Coaches reported that their benchmark assessment teams included:

- Reading coach (91% of schools)

- Specialists such as Title I, special education (42%)

- Literacy facilitators (12%)

- Paraprofessionals (39%)

- K–3 teachers (9%)

- Other staff members such as teachers from other grades, district staff, tutors, principals, and retired teachers

Data presented earlier in this chapter about the amount of time coaches spend in various activities indicate that, in many schools, coaches play a key role in the administration of benchmark assessments; 60 percent of coaches spent between 10 and 30 percent of their week coordinating and administering assessments. On the one hand, their constant presence is likely an aid to the consistency (and thus reliability) of administration. On the other hand, the responsibility must gradually shift away from the coach in schools that will no longer be able to fund a full-time position at the end of the grant.

Coaches reported that they received their training in the use of the DIBELS from either a summer institute and/or additional training offered by Carrie Hancock or state reading specialists. In turn, coaches provided training for assessment teams, usually aided by the video clips on Knowledge Box, so the training was somewhat standardized across schools.

Consistency in test administration is a prerequisite for making decisions based on test data. One efficient method coaches reported using to ensure consistency, was to review the administration and scoring of the DIBELS immediately prior to its use.

> *We make it a point that we go over the rules and talk about each section every time we have a testing period. We have breaks while scoring to 'remind' everyone of things. (Coach)*

> *I refresh myself before every benchmark assessment, so I know I'm doing it right. (Coach)*

All interviewed coaches reported that they were satisfied that the DIBELS was administered and scored correctly, although in some cases corrective action was initially required. A few coaches reported taking staff members off of test administration duties because of concern that that the DIBELS was not being correctly administered. In other cases, coaches retested students who had been tested by others because of concerns about the validity of original results. Retesting in and of itself, however, can be problematic.

Use of Data

Similar to last year, data systems were firmly established in Reading First schools; almost all survey respondents agreed that their school had an organized system for administering assessments and sharing their results. However, only one in four teachers (25%) had seen their data disaggregated by demographic subgroup such as race or gender.

Multiple data sources suggest that Reading First schools were using data frequently and for multiple purposes. All teachers reported using data at least once during the year; the majority did so at least several times a month. As with many findings in this report, cohort 1 demonstrated deeper implementation after three years of implementation as compared to their first-year colleagues in cohort 2 (Figure 4-7).
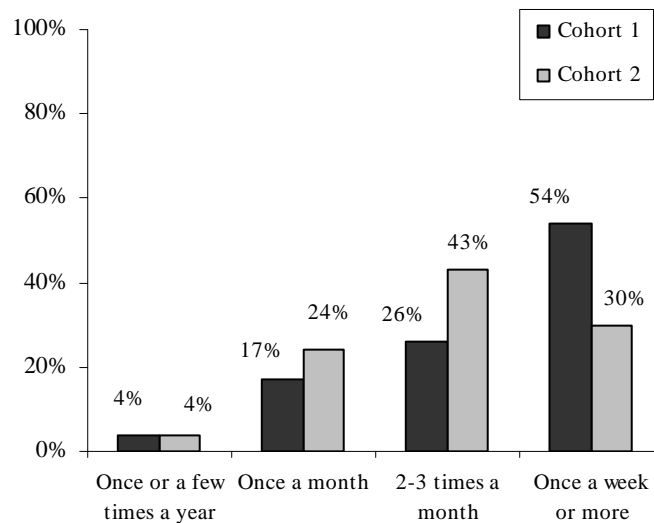
Figure 4-7. Frequency of Teachers' Use of Assessment Data

In addition to frequent use of data, teachers reported using the data for multiple purposes, as shown in Table 4-7. Teachers from both cohorts were most likely to usually or always use data in decisions related to interventions and when communicating with colleagues

about students' reading needs. They also frequently used data for grouping students in small instructional groups. While cohort 1 was more likely than cohort 2 to usually or always use data for all of the purposes in Table 4-7, the difference was particularly striking when considering school-wide trends (72% vs. 45 percent).

Table 4-7
Types of Use of Reading Assessment Data by Teachers

I use the results of reading assessments (such as the DIBELS) when…	"Usually" or "Always"	
	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
Identifying which students need interventions	96	92
Monitoring student progress in interventions	92	84
Matching students to the appropriate interventions	92	83
Communicating with colleagues about reading instruction and student needs	86	75
Grouping students into small instructional groups within my classroom	81	73
Looking at school-wide (K-3) trends	72	45
Meeting with parents	71	48
Modifying lessons from the core program	57	39

Note: Data are only from teachers who reported that they performed the task.

Principals and coaches also reported using data for multiple purposes.

- At least 90 percent of principals and coaches usually or always used data to group students, match students to interventions, and look at school-wide trends.

- The majority of principals (82%) also used data to communicate with teachers about their students or about their instruction (69%).

- A smaller percentage of principals used data when meeting with parents (44%).

These data did not differ substantially from 2005. Principals said in interviews that the results shown in the data helped convince staff that using data was essential to their success.

Teachers see the value of it—the test scores. (Coach)

Our reading scores have gone up so teachers see it is worth it to use it. (Principal)

Perception of the DIBELS

Survey data indicate that there was strong support for DIBELS among principals and coaches for both cohorts (Figure 4-8). Support among teachers was weaker, however. The data show:

- Almost all principals (97%) and coaches (90%) believed the DIBELS was valid and accurate. A lower percentage of teachers, but still the majority (65%) agreed.

- More than one-third of teachers (40%) felt Reading First overemphasized the importance of DIBELS. No coaches and a small percentage of principals (19%) agreed.

- Beliefs that DIBELS was valid and accurate was stronger among cohort 1 teachers than their cohort 2 peers (73% vs. 63%). There was a slight rise over the year in confidence among cohort 1 teachers (from 68% in 2005).
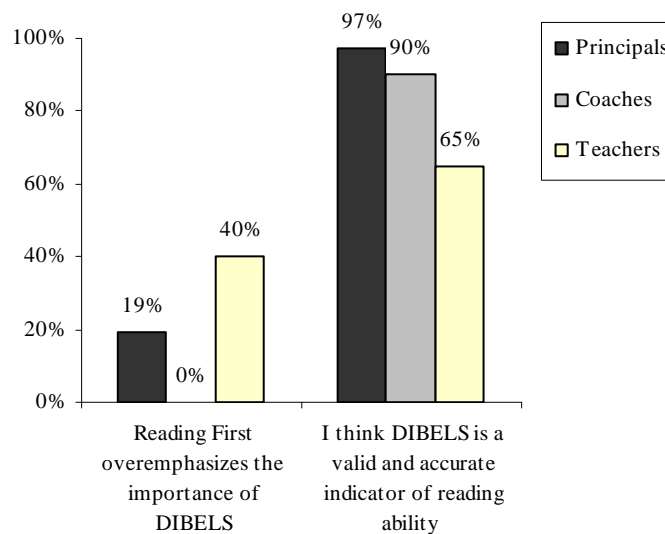
Figure 4-8. Reading First Staff Perceptions of the DIBELS

Sustainability

One important feature of most federally-funded initiatives is the requirement that grantees take steps to ensure the benefit of a program extends beyond the life of the grant. Cohort 1 ended their three-year grant eligibility in spring 2006. All 20 cohort 1 schools applied for, and received from the state, a small amount of continuation funding. These schools agreed to continue specific grant activities in 2006–2007, including the continued use of DIBELS, the core program, and reading block. Schools that did not meet the

continuation criteria[1] were granted extensions if they agreed to host a state team visit in the fall and implement that team's recommendations.

During the 2005–2006 school year, the state worked with schools and districts to create sustainability plans. In addition to addressing sustainability at coach and principal meetings, the state director and reading specialists met with principals and district superintendents to review and approve their plans. Almost all coaches (94%) and two-thirds of cohort 1 principals (67%) were pleased with the amount of support they had received from the state to address sustainability. These numbers may have increased further after the survey was administered since additional time was dedicated to this topic at the end of the school year.

Table 4-8
Sustainability

	Percentage Agreeing or Strongly Agreeing	
	Coaches	Principals
I am pleased with the amount of support we have received from the state to address issues of sustainability.	94	67
I believe that all of the instructional changes we made under Reading First will be sustained after the grant is over.	83	82

In addition, most coaches and principals believed that the instructional changes made under Reading First would be sustained under the grant. This strong agreement is likely due to the high percentage of principals who reported all or most program components would be continued in 2006–2007. Specifically:

- All principals reported that they planned to continue the 90-minute block, DIBELS, AIMSweb reporting, the core program, interventions, and grade-level meetings.

- All but one principal planned to continue the reading coach position and ongoing professional development in reading.

- Most schools, but not all, planned to continue having a RLT (82%), study groups (88%), and Knowledge Box (88%).

Teachers were also asked which components they believed would be continued. Mirroring their principals, most teachers believed interventions, grouping, and the core

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[1] Continuation criteria were established as 60 percent K–3 growth. That is, at least 60 percent of students maintained benchmark status or moved from strategic to intensive or out of intensive between fall 2005 and spring 2006.

program would continue, while fewer believed that study groups, the RLT, and the reading coach position would be continued when the grant ended.

In 2006–2007, the evaluation will track the DIBELS results in cohort 1 schools as well as administer short spring surveys to assess the level of continued implementation.

Chapter Five:
The Reading First Classroom
Reading Programs, Instruction, and Interventions

Previous chapters reviewed the work of Montana Reading First in the provision of professional development, the development of instructional leadership and collaborative structures and practices, and support for assessment systems. The purpose of all of this work is ultimately to create the awareness, knowledge, and external conditions necessary to enhance the delivery of instruction in the classroom.

This chapter examines evidence related to what instruction and interventions looked like in 2005–2006. The chapter begins with a review of the Reading First classroom, including use of the core reading program and issues of fidelity, and differentiated instruction. The chapter then describes the delivery of instruction from survey data from all schools as well as observations of cohort 2 classrooms. It ends with a description of the delivery of interventions for struggling readers.

Core Programs and the Reading Block

Montana Reading First schools use nine different core programs which were proposed and accepted during the grant application process. These programs are:

- Harcourt Brace Trophies
- Houghton Mifflin
- MacMillan/McGraw Hill
- Open Court
- Read Well (K–1)
- Reading Mastery
- Rigby
- Scott Foresman
- Success for All

Across these programs, satisfaction with the core program remained high; the majority of teachers (78%) and coaches (91%) reported that they were satisfied with their core program. Dissatisfaction with the core program was scattered among teachers from two-thirds of schools.

In 2005–2006, new lesson maps were added to guide teachers in prioritizing what is most important to teach and when to teach it. Most schools also added templates, generic instructional routines designed to make the core program more explicit by standardizing

procedures such as responses, signaling, pacing, and corrections. Over three-quarters of teachers (79%) reported that their students responded well to the patterned questions and responses laid out in the templates; an additional 17 percent said this was sometimes the case.

While the core program and templates were considered the "main materials" to use during the reading block, one in four coaches (26%) reported using additional supplemental programs in some or all grades (this is acceptable in Montana when data show a need for supplementing the core). In almost all of these cases, coaches were satisfied with the supplementary materials they used during the reading block. In an additional quarter of schools, coaches felt that there were gaps in their core program that needed to be addressed with supplemental programs, but they did not report using any.

Reading Block

Montana Reading First expects schools to use their core program for instruction during the 90-minute reading block (a minimum of 60 minutes in kindergarten). All but one school reported at least 90 minutes of reading in grades 1–3 (one school reported an 85-minute block) and all schools reported at least 60 minutes of reading in kindergarten, as shown in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1
Percentage of Schools Providing 90 Minutes or More of Reading Instruction

	2004–2005	2005–2006
Kindergarten*	70	71
Grade 1-3	100	97

  *All schools provided at least 60 minutes of reading, the state RF requirement.

The reading block was considered "uninterrupted" in 90 percent of schools. And only a small group of teachers (6%) reported that their reading block was interrupted at least once a month for non-reading tasks.

Fidelity and Modifications to the Core Program

The Montana Reading Improvement Plan (RIP) specifies that Reading First staff members will use the core program "as the main material for reading instruction" during the 90-minute block. At the same time, teachers are to adjust their classroom instruction based on collaborative discussions with colleagues and examination of assessment data. Similar to last year, most coaches and teachers said they followed a strict definition of fidelity, meaning that they followed the core program and lesson maps very closely and/or made modifications only after discussion with their peers and the reading coach.

In general, cohort 1 schools had a more flexible definition of fidelity after three years of implementation while cohort 2 schools had a tighter definition. Some teachers and coaches from cohort 1 pointed out that, over time, they had gained more "room to tweak and make adjustments to the program."

> *Fidelity means sticking with the program, although at grade-level meetings we might talk about things we want to change. People cannot change things unless we talk about it. (Coach)*

In contrast, cohort 2 teachers were more likely to define fidelity very strictly, describing only minor deviations from the lesson maps and core program.

> *We stick with the program every day. There is no wiggle room for changes or additions. (Coach)*

Survey results confirmed this finding; cohort 2 teachers were more likely to say that many modifications to the core program, such as changing the vocabulary words or the order of material in a lesson, were rarely or never okay (Table 5-2).

Table 5-2
Teachers' Responses to Questions About Fidelity to the Core Program

In my school, when we teach from the core reading program it is understood that it is ok to modify…	Percentage of Teachers Responding Never/Rarely Okay	
	Cohort 1	Cohort 2
by skipping a certain lesson entirely.	84	87
the texts students read for a particular theme.	74	84
the order in which the lessons are delivered (for example, Lesson 41 could go before Lesson 38).	73	79
the list of vocabulary words by deleting or substituting some words.	71	83
the comprehension questions that go with a particular text.	46	48
the pacing (for example, whether to move on at the program's suggested pace or to slow down or speed up as you think appropriate).	47	42
the order of material within a lesson (for example, the teacher can choose to present letter sounds before or after dictation).	46	63
the number of practice examples that students recite chorally.	31	38
the example or model that the teacher uses first to show students how to do the work.	38	57
the list of vocabulary words by adding additional words.	27	45
the way students are asked to respond (for example, chorally instead of individually).	24	26

Overall, the findings presented in Table 5-2 above mirror results from last year. That is, most teachers believed that the structure and order of lessons should seldom be changed, but had mixed beliefs about the acceptability of other modifications such as changing comprehension questions, vocabulary words, or teacher examples. Modifications such as adding vocabulary words or changing the response style were viewed as the most acceptable kinds of modifications.

While the majority of interviewed teachers believed that fidelity expectations were reasonable, there was a sizable group (especially among cohort 2 teachers) that voiced concerns about the restrictions placed on modifying the core program. The two most frequently voiced concerns were that 1) pacing was unreasonable and 2) the needs of the highest-level students were not met by the lessons.

> *There is no meaning behind some of the fidelity. If a kid has a question, you can't stop and answer it because you have to keep moving through the material. Kids are bored or else not challenged. (Teacher)*

Targeted Instruction and Grouping

Montana Reading First promotes instruction that is targeted at each student's reading level. Teachers are to use assessment data to determine flexible groups that, along with all reading instruction, targets each student's individual instructional level.

Grouping

One strategy for targeting instruction to individual needs is to group students in small, flexible groups based on assessment results. Interviewed coaches were very confident in the processes they had in place for grouping students.

> *We are doing a really, really good job with grouping. We spend an enormous amount of time testing every student and then looking at each kid to see where they belong. (Coach)*

In addition to grouping students within classrooms, about two-thirds of schools (69%) grouped some or all students across classrooms. This strategy, "walk-to-read" (WTR), entails students leaving their homeroom during the reading block and walking to a classroom where everyone is at or near the same level.

While schools were pleased, overall, with their systems for grouping, several concerns and challenges emerged in interviews. First, several coaches from both cohorts said their group sizes were too large. Second, cohort 2 coaches reported that some teachers were still struggling to accept the constant "reshuffling" of students or had some groups that still were not homogenous.

Teacher involvement in grouping decisions is important for sustaining WTR and other grouping structures once the grant is over. Coaches reported that teachers were involved in grouping decisions in almost all schools. The coach also remained an important player; involved in grouping decisions in 76 percent of schools, although data do not determine the extent of the coach's role in these decisions (e.g., it may be that teacher involvement is dependent on the coach organizing data and leading the discussions). Principals were involved in grouping decisions in 42 percent of schools.

Differentiated Instruction

Grouping students by skill level does not in and of itself guarantee that instruction will be targeted to students' levels. Instruction itself must be tailored to meet the needs of the different groups, and the individuals within those groups. Most smaller Montana Reading First schools reported that their class size was so small that differentiation was eased by ratios as small as three students to one teacher. Overall, however, there were mixed reactions about the extent to which instruction was truly differentiated.

Only one-half of surveyed teachers (51%) said that their students usually or always received differentiated instruction, while one in four (25%) said this rarely or never happened. Similarly, 21 percent of teachers said that their students regularly needed more differentiation than they were able to provide (Figure 5-1).
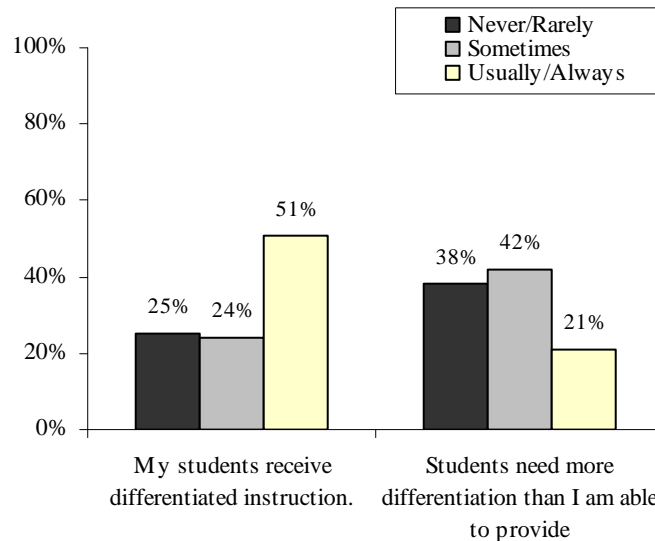
Figure 5-1. Teachers' Perception of Differentiated Instruction

Some of the teachers who felt limited in their ability to differentiate, pointed to the tension between keeping fidelity to the core program and modifying it to meet individual needs. This was especially apparent in interviews with cohort 2 teachers, one of whom said that "maintaining strict fidelity to the core program means we can't change things for the higher or lower students which leaves them confused or bored."

Another roadblock to adequate differentiation was a lack of paraprofessionals or other adults to work with individuals or small groups. One-half of surveyed teachers (51%) said they worked regularly with a paraprofessional, the other half (49%) said they never or rarely had paras in their classroom which, for all but the smallest schools, made it more difficult for teachers to lead small groups.

Other interviewed teachers were more positive, expressing confidence that they were able to meet students' needs. They attributed their success to small group size, often aided by the presence of paraprofessionals or other adults who could work with students. Some teachers were also pleased with the core program material options for different student levels (e.g., three levels of workbooks). Finally, as described in the previous chapter, assessment data proved a valuable tool to inform many teachers about the needs of individual students.

Another consideration for differentiating instruction is meeting the needs of students from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds. In Montana Reading First, Native Americans represent at least 32 percent of the students served by the grant.[2] Some schools served a small number of Native American students, while in other schools almost the entire student body was composed of Native American students. Only one school reported no Native American students in grades K–3.

Figure 5-2 shows that between one-fourth and one-third of coaches, principals, and teachers believed that Native American students required different instructional approaches than their non-Native peers. In last year's evaluation, participants who shared this view believed that Native American students required approaches that were more visual, oral, hands-on, or gave more attention to vocabulary development and background knowledge.

There were very mixed responses among teachers about whether or not the Reading First program was doing an excellent job meeting the needs of Native American students; 52 percent of teachers agreed that this was true. Agreement was higher among coaches (65%) and principals (72%). (Chapter 6 describes the achievement of Native American students including the finding that there was higher growth in achievement among Native Americans in three of four grades, although this growth was not enough to close the achievement gap.)
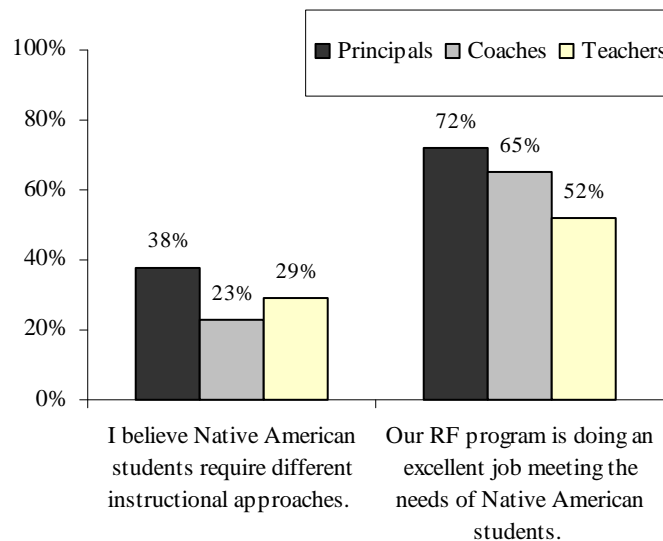
Figure 5-2. Perceptions of Needs of Native American Students

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[2]DIBELS demographic information from spring 2006 was used to calculate this percentage.

Instructional Practices

Under Reading First, students are to receive explicit, systematic instruction in the five essential components of reading identified by the National Reading Panel: phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). This year, the evaluation examined instructional practices with two different instruments. First, new survey items queried teachers and coaches in all schools about instructional practices, focusing on those related to vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension.[3] Second, a random selection of classrooms in cohort 2 schools were observed during six site visits. Survey data are reported below, followed by data from observations.

Vocabulary

The National Reading Panel (2000) noted that a knowledge of vocabulary and sufficient background information to comprehend were essential to successful reading. The direct instruction of particular vocabulary words is one way to help students increase their vocabularies. Also important is providing students with the skills to identify and interpret word parts, to build an ability to ascertain meaning from context, and, as Beck (2002) pointed out, to create a heightened awareness to the use of words around them.

Survey responses indicate that Montana Reading First teachers were usually or always following the following research-based practices (see Table 5-3):

- Providing multiple exposures to new vocabulary

- Activating background knowledge when introducing new vocabulary

- Not having students copy definitions of new words form the dictionary or glossary

Responses also indicate that more attention might be paid to:

- Developing and using "student-friendly" definitions of new words

- Checking for understanding of words using both examples and non-examples

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[3]The strength of many core programs is their systematic and explicit instruction in phonics and phonemic awareness. Comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency are the components that often need enhancement above and beyond what is provided in the core. For these reasons, the survey questions focused on these three components.

Overall, cohort 1 coaches were more likely than their cohort 2 peers to report regularly observing these research-based practices. However, teacher self-report was similar in both cohorts. This discrepancy may be due to teacher self-report bias inherent in any such questions, or to a difference in understanding of what these practices entail.

Table 5-3
Vocabulary Instruction Practices

	Percentage of Coaches Responding "Usually" or "Always"	
In general, when you go into K-3 classrooms to observe teachers during reading, how often are you likely to observe the following:	**Cohort 1**	**Cohort 2**
Teacher provides multiple exposures to new vocabulary.	90	85
Teacher activates background knowledge when introducing new vocabulary.	84	69
Teacher checks for understanding of words using examples and non-examples.	58	44
	Percentage of Teachers Responding "Usually" or "Always"	
In general, students in my reading classroom…	**Cohort 1**	**Cohort 2**
Develop "student-friendly" definitions of new vocabulary words.	70	68
Copy definitions of new vocabulary words from the dictionary or glossary.	8	8

Comprehension

Research has identified a range of practices employed by good readers to understand texts, especially to make meaning out of challenging text. As Table 5-4 shows, the majority of Montana Reading First teachers are using some research-based comprehension strategies, especially:

- Posing questions that asked for more than literal recall

- Making predictions before or during a story

- Explicitly modeling reading comprehension strategies

Fewer coaches observed students regularly looking back in text to find specific examples that support their response, although this is not necessarily a strategy that always needs to be employed.

There were a sizable group (one-third to one-fourth), however, that observed these practices "sometimes" or "rarely," especially in cohort 2. The state has already planned some 2006-07 professional development focused on such topics; additional attention may be warranted.

Table 5-4
Comprehension Instruction Practices

	Percentage of Coaches Responding "Usually" or "Always"	
In general, when you go into K-3 classrooms to observe teachers during reading, how often are you likely to observe the following:	**Cohort 1**	**Cohort 2**
Teacher poses questions that ask for more than literal recall.	84	62
Students answer questions, make predictions, and summarize stories as the teacher reads.	79	69
Teacher explicitly models reading comprehension strategies.	74	70
Students look back in the text to find specific examples that support their responses.	53	39
	Percentage of Teachers Responding "Usually" or "Always"	
In general, students in my reading classroom…	**Cohort 1**	**Cohort 2**
are expected to answer comprehension questions that involve higher-order thinking.	69	68

Fluency

Reading fluency refers to the ability to process text smoothly, without having to struggle to decode each word encountered. Fluency includes considerations of speed, accuracy and phrasing, or prosody. The major instructional approach to fluency which has proven effective is repeated and monitored oral reading in which students read passages aloud several times and receive feedback and guidance from a teacher or other adult.

Responses indicate that Montana Reading First teachers were usually or always following these research-based practices (see Table 5-5):

- Utilizing peer guidance or partner reading in fluency practice[4]

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[4]While the majority of coaches reported seeing this practice regularly, evaluators saw partner/peer work in only 29 percent of observed classrooms. While the observations were admittedly short and may not have

- Engaging students in repeated and monitored oral reading

- Providing multiple opportunities for practice (chorally, with an adult, with partners, or with a support)

Responses also indicate that more attention might be paid to the following, especially among cohort 2 schools:

- Explaining to students how and why to read with a certain emphasis, tone, or phrasing

- Ensuring that students have adequate independent level text (in which no more than one in 20 words is difficult) available for oral reading practice

- Ending the use of round robin reading

Table 5-5
Fluency Instruction Practices

	Percentage of Coaches Responding "Usually" or "Always"	
In general, when you go into K-3 classrooms to observe teachers during reading, how often are you likely to observe the following:	**Cohort 1**	**Cohort 2**
Students engage in repeated and monitored oral reading (reading a given passage aloud to an adult multiple times).	73	69
Fluency practice includes peer guidance/partner reading.	94	75
Teacher explains to students how and why to read with a certain emphasis, tone, or phrasing.	84	54
Teacher uses "round robin" reading.	15*	54*
	Percentage of Teachers Responding "Usually" or "Always"	
In general, students in my reading classroom…	**Cohort 1**	**Cohort 2**
Have multiple opportunities to practice oral reading (chorally, with an adult, with partners, and/or with a support such as an audio tape or computer program).	96	81
Are frustrated when they practice oral reading because the text is too difficult.	33*	35*

*Percent includes those answering "sometimes," "usually," or "always."

captured the extent to which partner work was used in the classrooms, this discrepancy also suggests a potential over-reporting for this and other survey items in this series.

Observed Instruction in Cohort 2 Classrooms

Site visitors observed 17 randomly selected classrooms in six cohort 2 schools near the end of their first year of implementation. Each observation was 20 minutes in length; teachers were not informed of the protocol details prior to or during the observations. Details of observation methodology are found in the Methods chapter.

The size of observed classrooms was often fairly small, ranging from two to 20 students; 11 students was the average. Almost three-fourths of classrooms (70%) had no adult other than the teacher working with the students. The others usually had one other adult, often a paraprofessional, whose role it was to work with small groups or one-on-one with students.

Evaluators noted which of the five essential components identified by the National Reading Panel (2000) were taught during their observations by noting instruction in five-minute increments (blocks). The majority of observed lesson blocks focused on phonics skills (39%) and/or comprehension (44%). Some lessons had instruction in fluency (18%) and/or vocabulary (18%), but only one part of one observation included phonemic awareness instruction. Due to the small number of observations done only during the spring of the year, these findings should not be generalized to assume that Reading First schools are focusing on one area over another.

In addition to descriptive notes about the content of each lesson, evaluators rated each lesson using a rubric that focused on the following characteristics:

- Lesson clarity

- Scaffolded instruction as evidenced by explicit modeling and effective questioning

- Student engagement and effective use of time

- Monitoring of student understanding and provision of direct feedback to students

From this admittedly small sample, evaluators saw lessons that represented the full range of the rubric. That is, while many lessons demonstrated the characteristics listed above, there were an equal or sometimes greater number of classrooms in which the characteristics were weak or absent. Figure 5-3 shows that 59 percent of lessons were sufficiently clear, 35 percent of teachers used modeling or guided questioning to scaffold the lesson, and 53 percent of classrooms demonstrated active engagement of students. Additionally, the teacher visibly monitored student understanding in 47 percent of classrooms and provided feedback in 65 percent of classrooms.

Details of the findings for each characteristic follow the figure.
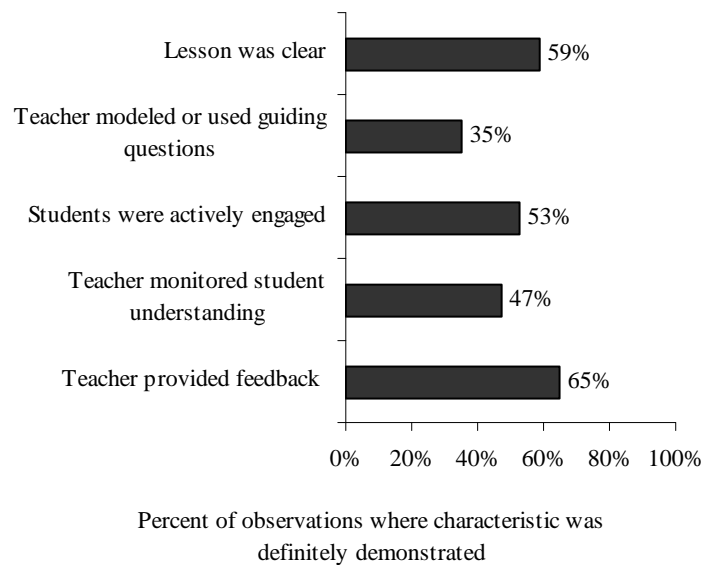
Figure 5-3. Characteristics of Observed Cohort 2 Classrooms (End of Year 1)

Clarity of Lessons. Over one-half of the lessons (59%) were very clear; students appeared to understand the directions and procedures during the observation. In these lessons, teachers gave clear and explicit directions to students and routines and procedures were well known so they did not interfere with clarity. Most of these classrooms also demonstrated strong evidence of active student engagement, teacher monitoring, and feedback.

In the remaining 41 percent of classrooms, clarity sometimes lapsed and students appeared confused for some or all of the lesson. In some cases, directions were too long or confusing for students, in other cases students did not understand how to answer one or more questions posed by the teacher. When the lesson was not clear, students were less likely to be engaged. In the example below, the teacher spends a lot of time trying to explain herself to students.

The class finishes listening to a story on tape and then begins a discussion.

Teacher: Do you think you should be modest like the character Lou, or boast? That is a question for you.

Students do not respond and seem confused so the teacher spends some time rephrasing and explaining the question. Students still do not respond. She then

draws a "T" chart on the board with the word 'modest' on one side and 'boast' on the other and then partners students.

Teacher: Think of all the reasons that you think you should be modest or you think you should boast and tell your partner. Begin.

Some students begin to do the work with their partner; others look confused about what they are supposed to do or what the words mean.

Modeling and/or Guided Questioning. In classrooms that demonstrated sufficient evidence of modeling, teachers modeled often and their modeling was clear and explicit. Another strategy to scaffold student learning, guided questioning, was evident when the teacher asked least one clear and guiding question during the 20-minute observation. Observers saw evidence of sufficient modeling or guiding students with effective questioning in one-third of classrooms (35%). It should be noted that not all lessons need to have modeling or guided questions present; this is especially true in the spring when many procedures are likely already established through modeling earlier in the year. In some observations, the absence of modeling or guided questioning did not present any problems for students; they promptly and correctly responded to lesson activities.

In a handful of lessons, however, the absence of modeling confused students. In one classroom, a teacher offered to take turns with students in answering questions, but she asked a student to go first rather than modeling the correct response herself. The student answered incorrectly, which may have been avoided if the teacher had practiced the "I do," "we do," "you do" strategy.

A similar finding was true for guided questioning. While there were some positive examples of teachers asking students questions that helped them find their own answers, there were also instances where teachers answered their own questions if students were confused, rather than stepping back to re-scaffold their question series to help students find the answer.

Active Student Engagement. In the 53 percent of classrooms that demonstrated clear evidence of active student engagement, all students actively participated in the lesson with minor or brief exceptions or interruptions from which the teacher easily brought students back on task. In the strongest examples, students not only participated, but seemed to love what they were doing. In these classrooms, teachers provided multiple opportunities for students to practice through choral, individual, and partner responses. In these classrooms, like the example below, teachers alternated between calling on those who volunteered to answer and a more random selection to make sure most students had a chance to respond. In these classrooms, like the example below, there was also more time for student involvement because time was not wasted on transitions and students knew the routines and rules quite well.

The teacher gives very brief and specific directions for her first-grade students to get a white board, eraser, and marker, which are all piled neatly in the corner of the classroom. She calls on them by rows to get their materials and then counts down from five to zero to signal that all students should be in their seats. This entire transition takes about two minutes.

> *Teacher: Ready? Write down these letters on your board. R-I-G-H-T. You should have R-I-G-H-T. Kim,[5] you need to stay with us. Here we go. We're going to blend.*
>
> *All students blend the word 'right' together (choral response).*
>
> *Teacher: Does anyone have a sentence? (She calls on a student with her hand raised.)*
>
> *Student: The sentence is right.*
>
> *Student: I am always right.*
>
> *Teacher: Erase your 'R' and change it to an 'L'. Let's blend together.*
>
> *Students blend 'light' together (choral response).*
>
> *Teacher: Very good! Does anyone have a sentence? (She calls on a student who does not have his hand raised).*
>
> *Student: I am a light.*
>
> *Teacher: Hmmm. That would be very interesting (laughs)! I can almost see a light bulb growing out of your head!*

In contrast, lower student engagement was usually the result of one or more issues. In some cases, the teacher used only individual student responses during the 20-minute observation and/or only called on students who had their hands raised, meaning a proportion of students never participated. In other cases, the teacher used choral response frequently, but not all students participated. In two classroom observations, teachers struggled with classroom management which cut into time for students to participate in the lesson. Surprisingly, one of these classrooms was very small (only three students), suggesting that small class size does not always guarantee high student engagement.

Teachers used partner work, a strategy to increase student response, in one-quarter (29%) of observed classrooms. While some partner work was very effective, in a few instances

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[5]All student names have been changed.

it was not. For example, one teacher had students work in groups of three rather than partners; the observer noted that students were confused about when and how to take turns with three students, which the teacher did not explicitly clarify.

Monitoring Student Understanding and Providing Feedback. While following the core program, teachers must constantly monitor student understanding and adjust the lesson based on what that monitoring yields. In half of classrooms (47%) this practice was clearly evident.

In some classrooms, observers noted instances where the teacher stopped the lesson and worked backwards to correct student mistakes. For example, in one classroom, some kindergarten students did not correctly pronounce the word "zip." Instead of moving on, the teacher stopped, modeled the word and row of words for them, and asked them to repeat it again.

In contrast, there were several instances where mistakes went unaddressed. For example, in a first-grade choral reading of a book, students mispronounced "meadow" (they said "middle") and did not read the word "whinnied" at all, but the teacher had them continue reading the story and did not return to those words during the rest of the observation.

Many of the classrooms with strong evidence of monitoring student understanding also showed evidence of positive, direct, and frequent feedback to students (65% of lessons). Comments ranged from simple acknowledgment of a correct answer ("good job" or "that is correct") to feedback that likely boosted student understanding and/or excitement about the lesson ("Great! You have some really good ideas about how those sentences are different and how they are the same" or, when a student was struggling to answer, "It is OK. You are important and we can wait [for your answer]").

In other classrooms, the teacher provided feedback, but it was either infrequent or unclear. In one case, the tone of feedback from the teacher was extremely negative; the majority of teacher comments were disciplinary or even hurtful ("Are you four years old or five? Then come on and cut your paper like a five-year old!").

Overall lesson ratings. Many of the characteristics rated during observations overlap in some ways. For example, most clearly presented lessons also demonstrated student engagement, just as unclear lessons were often rated lower in student engagement. Regarding four of the ratings (clarity, student engagement, monitoring, and feedback):

- One-quarter of observations (29%) demonstrated evidence of all four characteristics.

- In contrast, another quarter of observations (23%) demonstrated little or no evidence of any of the four characteristics.

- The remaining half of observations (47%) received mixed ratings; for example, the lesson was clear and the teacher provided appropriate feedback, but students were not fully engaged.

Cohort 1 classrooms observed in 2005, after almost two years of implementation, demonstrated higher frequencies of these characteristics, suggesting that there is great room for instructional growth over the next year in cohort 2 schools. The cohort 2 findings emphasize the need for intensive, individualized coaching at each school to reach the different instructional needs; some teachers need more assistance with student engagement strategies than others, for example. These issues will be easier to focus on in year 2 since many teachers will be more comfortable with the core materials and templates (a major focus of coaching in year 1).

Provision of Interventions

Interventions are a critical part of the Reading First design, providing additional, targeted, small-group instruction for those students who need more than the core reading program in order to read at grade level. Montana Reading First uses the terms "schoolwide targeted services" and "intensive interventions" to define additional services for "strategic" and "intensive" students. According to the RIP, targeted services were to be delivered to homogenous groups of five students or fewer for 30-minutes, which is additional to the 90-minute reading block. Re-teach/pre-teach of the core program and/or supplemental materials that extend the critical elements of the core program could be used during this time.

For students with marked difficulties in reading or reading disabilities, who do not respond to core and targeted services, intensive interventions should be delivered. A minimum of 45 extra minutes of instruction per day should be delivered to small groups of students. Individual goals should be set for these students, and continuous progress monitoring is required at least twice a month (progress monitoring is also required for targeted services).

Number of Students Receiving Interventions

According to coaches, approximately 33 percent of students received interventions for at least two hours a week[6] for at least six weeks, similar to the previous year's 34 percent.[7] An additional 26 percent received interventions for a lesser amount of time, an increase from 20 percent the previous year.

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[6]Percentage was calculated using the total number of students (3,097 in 2004–2005 and 4,883 in 2005–2006) with matched fall and winter DIBELS scores.
[7]Although evaluators defined intensive interventions as 2 hours a week, the Montana RIP specified a greater amount of time; at least 45 minutes a day every day (3.75 hours per week).

Table 5-6
Number of Students Receiving Interventions

	2004–2005	2005–2006
Intensive interventions (Outside the reading block, at least 2 hours per week for at least 6 weeks)	1,063 (34% of all students)	1,587* (33%)
Less intensive interventions (Outside the reading block, less than 2 hours per week and/or less than 6 weeks)	605 (20%)	1,255** (26%)

*Total from 31 of the 33 schools
**Total from 30 of the 33 schools

Although the table above shows that many students received interventions during the year, coaches from many schools reported that not all students who needed interventions received them. As shown in Table 5-7, 41 percent of schools said that not all students classified as "strategic" by the DIBELS received interventions, and 28 percent said that they did not reach all of their intensive students. This corresponds with interview data; coaches reported that they focused first on the lowest students (most "intensive") if forced to choose where to put their resources.

The table also shows that cohort 1 schools were much more likely than cohort 2 schools to report serving all eligible students in interventions. This is not surprising since cohort 2 schools were in their first year of implementation and it is likely that during the first part of the year they were focused on establishing the core program and assessment systems.

Table 5-7
Proportion of Eligible Students Receiving Interventions

	Percentage of Schools Where All Eligible Students Did NOT Receive Interventions		
	Cohort 1	Cohort 2	Total
Students in "strategic" group	31	53	**41**
Students in "intensive" group	16	46	**28**

Challenges and Successes of Interventions

Coaches pointed to several challenges to providing quality interventions to 100 percent of eligible students. Many of these challenges mirror those reported in 2005 from which the state took action by providing professional development and technical assistance that addressed many of the challenges described below. The state project director reported that these school-specific needs will continue to be addressed in the upcoming year:

Time and scheduling. Many schools continued to struggle with finding the right time, and enough time, for interventions. This was true even in cohort 1 schools in their third year of grant implementation.

> *Scheduling all students is a challenge. It is hard to find a proper time to pull kids out and to have staff during that time. (Coach)*

Lack of staff to provide interventions. According to coaches, interventions were provided by a mix of specialists (73%), paraprofessionals (61% of schools), K-3 teachers (52%), and the reading coach (49%). Only about half of principals (57%) agreed that staff resources were sufficient to provide interventions to all students who needed them. The lack of staff members either led to less students receiving interventions or to group sizes that were too large. In fact, while the RIP specified an ideal group size of five students or fewer, half of coaches (50%) reported that their school had intensive groups that were larger than five students. As shown in the figure below, one in five schools had at least one intervention group that was between eight and 18 students.
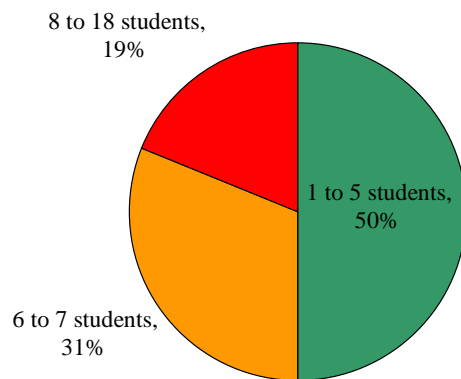
Figure 5-4. Size of Largest Intervention Groups

Staff training. While the majority of teachers (72%) and coaches (75%) believed that their intervention providers were well trained, a concern among a group of interviewed coaches was that providers were either not adequately trained or did not follow the program (e.g., used their own materials or their "old ways" of teaching). These concerns were mostly voiced by cohort 2 teachers.

> *Our paraprofessionals (who provide interventions) are really nice people, but they are not trained to know how to pick out appropriate materials to meet the needs of students. (Coach)*

Materials. Although the majority of surveyed coaches (84%) and teachers (61%) agreed that intervention materials were well matched to the needs of struggling readers, a substantial group of interviewed coaches mentioned a need for more or better materials. Some were unsatisfied with particular programs they had already purchased, while others were still seeking programs to meet the needs of students on the extreme ends of achievement (e.g., the very low and very high students).

Despite these challenges, interviewed coaches were excited about the successes of their intervention programs, and frequently cited student growth and decreases in special education referrals as accomplishments.

> *Our referrals to special education are way down because we can provide those students with services (interventions) immediately. We aren't arguing over whether or not those kids are the responsibility of us or of special education teachers. (Coach)*

> *Our greatest success is seeing quite a few students move from intensive to strategic or benchmark. We have truly refined what we do for interventions for students. (Coach)*

While both cohorts experienced successes in their intervention programs, survey data indicates that cohort 1 schools were more satisfied with the programs they had established over the past three years than their cohort 2 colleagues who were in their first year of implementation. As the figure below shows, the majority of teachers, coaches, and principals felt their school was doing an excellent job providing appropriate interventions to all students who needed them, but satisfaction was markedly higher among cohort 1 respondents.
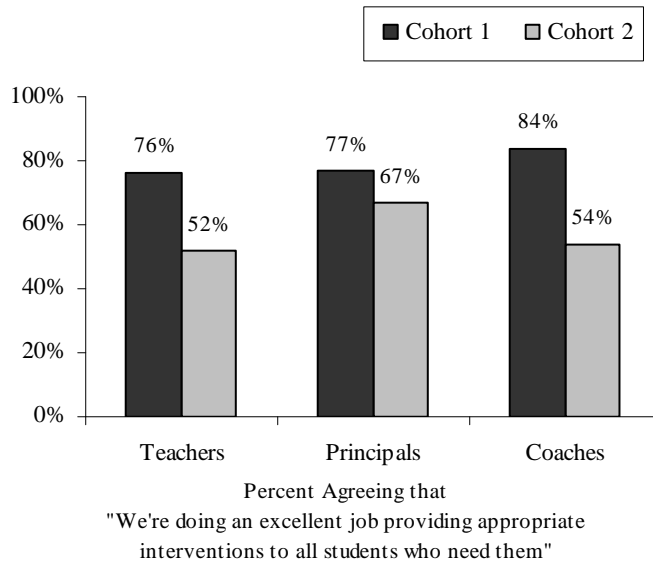
Figure 5-5. Perception of Interventions

Chapter Six:
Student Assessment Results

To measure the progress of students in reading, all Montana Reading First schools use the *Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills*, or DIBELS, which is administered three times per year: fall, winter, and spring. This report summarizes assessment data from the 2005–2006 school year. For a more detailed description of procedures for coding and analyzing scores, please refer to Chapter 2: Methods.

Chapter Organization

Analysis of DIBELS assessment results are presented as follows:

(1) Overall Project-Level Results: A graphic overview and significance testing of results between fall and spring of the 2005–2006 school year.

(2) Cohort 1 Results

    a. Cross-Year Results: Graphic overview and significance testing of results from spring 2004, spring 2005, and spring 2006.

    b. Spring 2006 Instructional Support Recommendations (ISRs): Tables reporting the spring 2006 percentage of students in each of the three overall ISRs.

    c. Trends in the Attainment of Benchmark: Tables and analyses presenting the percentage of students at benchmark over time.

    d. Longitudinal Analyses: A section examining changes in DIBELS results for intact groups of students over time.

(3) Cohort 2 Results

    a. Spring 2006 Instructional Support Recommendations (ISRs): Graphic overview and tables reporting the spring 2006 percentage of students in each of the three overall ISRs.

    b. Trends in the Attainment of Benchmark: Tables and analyses presenting the percentage of students at benchmark over time.

Where appropriate, data are disaggregated by key demographic characteristics—ethnicity, eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), English

language learner (ELL) status, and eligibility for special education—as well as by individual Reading First school. ***All analyses were conducted with matched data, meaning that only students with valid fall 2005 and spring 2006 scores were included.***

Overall Project-Level Results

Changes in Percentage of Students at Benchmark

Figure 6-1 below presents the change between the beginning (fall 2005) and end (spring 2006) of the school year in the percentage of students across all 33 Montana Reading First schools that were at or above benchmark as measured by the DIBELS. The data show that there were substantial increases in the percentage of students at benchmark at all grades during the school year. The increase in the percentage of students at benchmark was statistically significant in all grades (McNemars test<0.001).
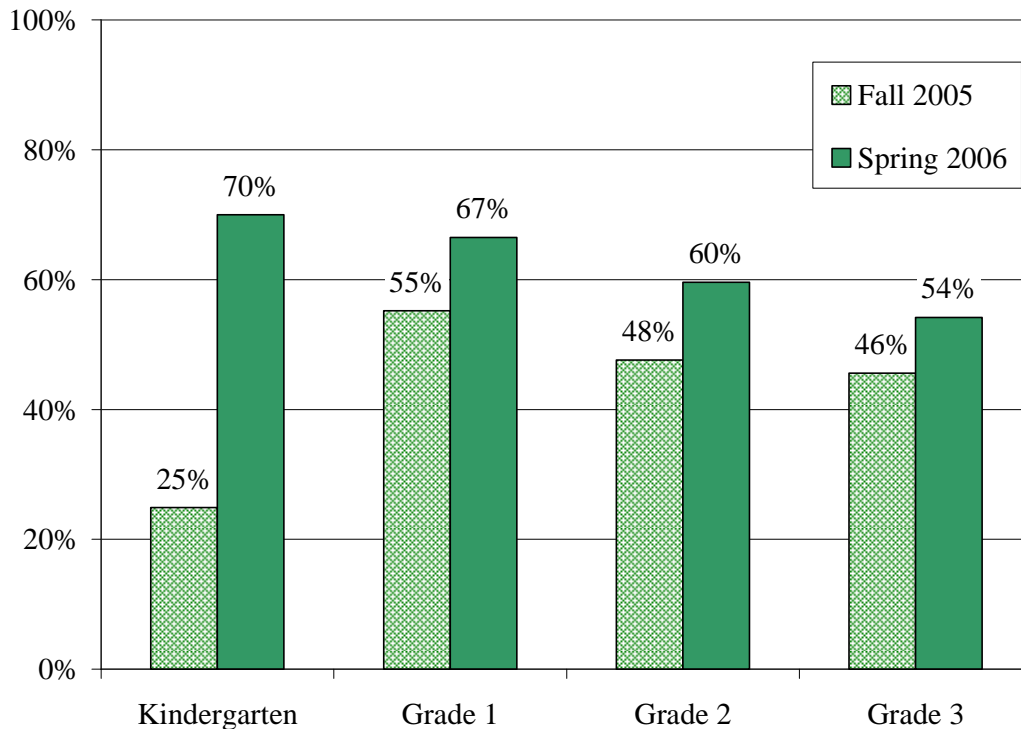
(N for each grade ranges from 1,203 to 1,236 students)

Figure 6-1. Percentage of Students at Benchmark, Fall 2005 to Spring 2006 (Cohort 1 and 2)

Changes in Percentage of Students in Intensive

Progress in Reading First is measured not only by the increase in the percentage of students at benchmark, but also by a decrease in the percentage of students who are struggling in reading. The DIBELS identifies those students who are struggling the most as "intensive," meaning that they are in need of the school's most intensive interventions to bring them up to level.

Figure 6-2 below presents the change between the beginning (fall 2005) and end (spring 2006) of the school year in the percentage of students across all 33 Montana Reading First schools that were in the intensive group as measured by the DIBELS. The data show that there were decreases in the percentage of students in intensive at all grades during the school year. These changes were statistically significant in all grades (McNemars test<0.001 for kindergarten, first and third grades; McNemars test<0.01 for second grade).

(N for each grade ranges from 1,203 to 1,236 students)
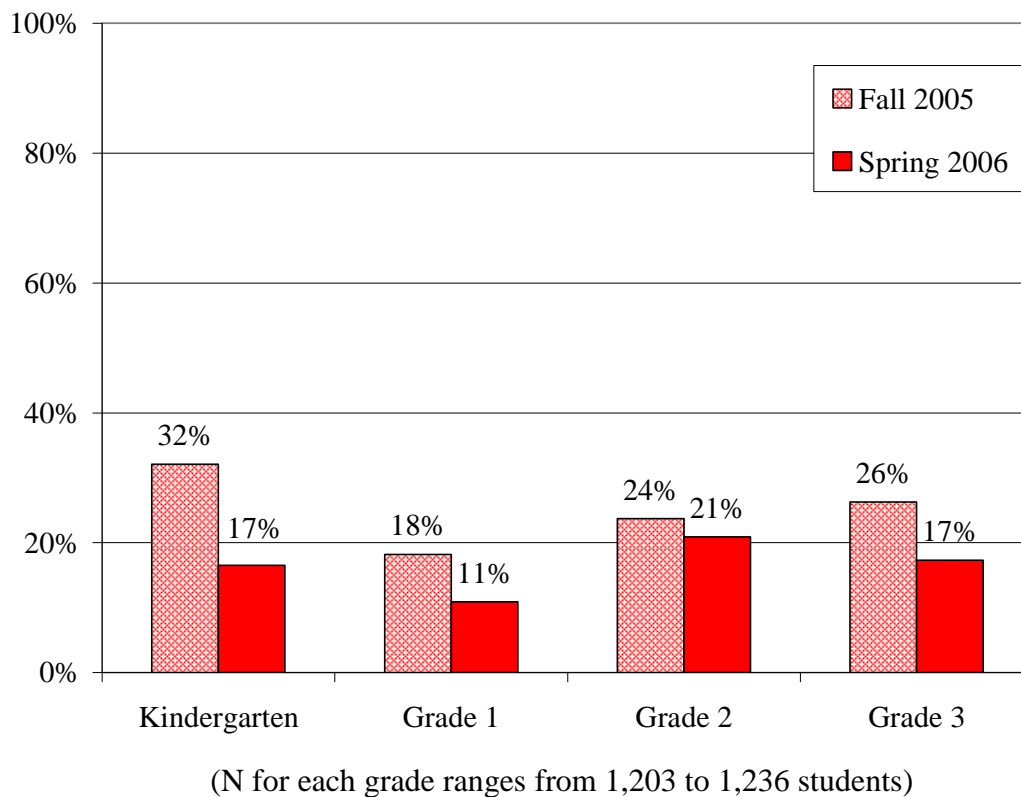
**Figure 6-2. Percentage of Students in Intensive, Fall 2005 to Spring 2006
(Cohort 1 and 2)**

The subsequent two sections will look at change across years for each cohort in these same measures.

Cohort 1 Results

Cohort 1 schools began implementation of the grant in the beginning of 2004. Figure 6-3 presents the change in the percentage of cohort 1 students at or above benchmark as measured by the DIBELS between spring 2004, spring 2005, and spring 2006. Please note that data represent different students at different points in time. From spring 2004 to spring 2005, there was growth in the percentage of students at benchmark in all four grades. From spring 2005 to spring 2006, there was growth in three of four grades (kindergarten, first, and second). However, the growth was smaller than the previous year and none of the increases were statistically significant (Pearson chi-square). Third grade saw a slight decline from 2005 to 2006, marking a change from the previous year in which growth had been substantial.

(N for each grade ranges from 647 to 833 students)
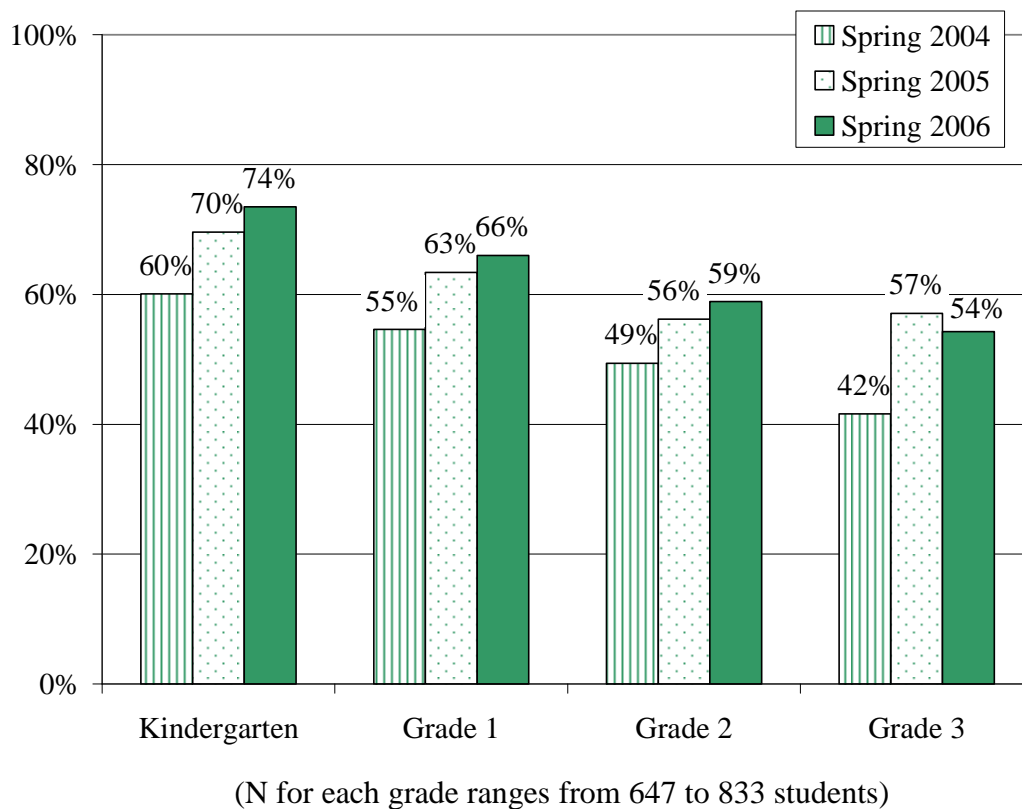
Figure 6-3. Percentage of Students at Benchmark, Cohort 1,
Spring 2004 to Spring 2006

Figure 6-4 presents the change in the percentage of cohort 1 students in the intensive grouping as measured by the DIBELS between spring 2004, spring 2005, and spring 2006. Please note that data represent different students at different points in time. Between spring 2004 and spring 2005, there were decreases in the percentage of students in the intensive group in every grade. Between spring 2005 and spring 2006, there were decreases in kindergarten and second grade. There was no change in first grade, and third grade saw a slight increase. None of these changes were statistically significant (Pearson chi-square).

(N for each grade ranges from 647 to 833 students)
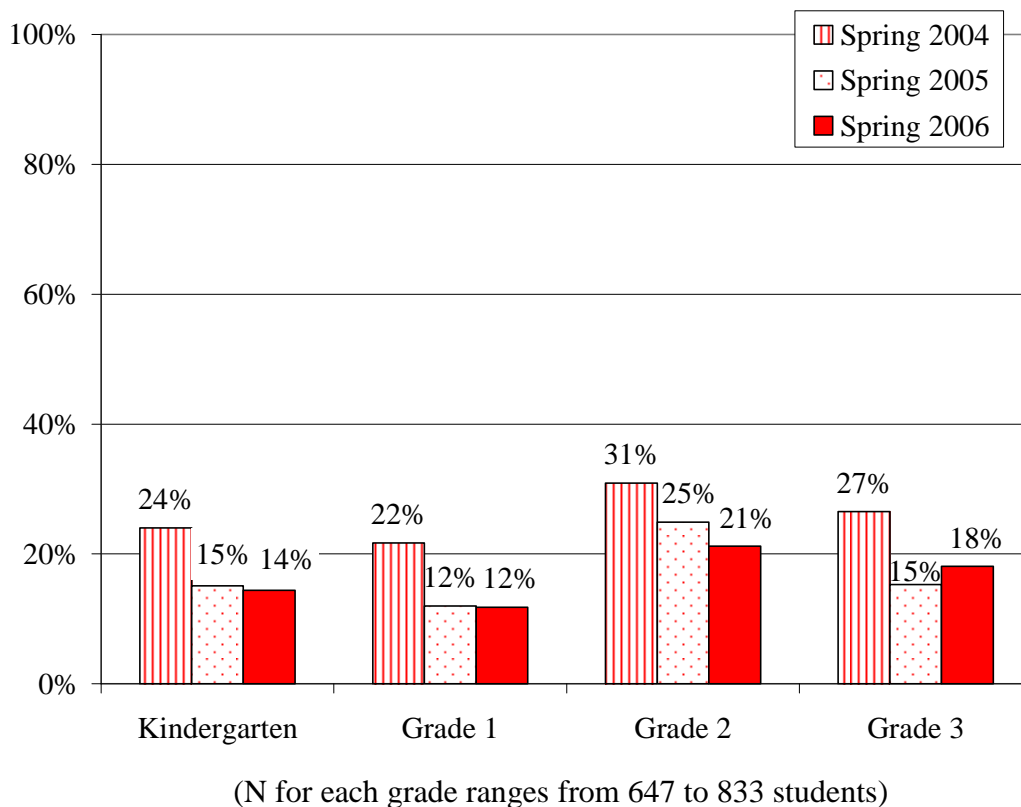
Figure 6-4. Percentage of Students in Intensive on the DIBELS, Cohort 1, Spring 2004 to Spring 2006

Spring 2006 Instructional Support Recommendations

This section presents cohort 1 results from the spring 2006 DIBELS for all grades. Tables 6-1 through 6-4 present the percentage of students in each of the Instructional Support Recommendation (ISR) categories: intensive, strategic, and benchmark. The numbers across each row should add up to 100 percent; all data are from matched students (those with both fall and spring scores).

Across grades, the data show that in spring 2006:

- The largest proportion of students at benchmark was in kindergarten (74%), followed by first (66%), second (59%), and third (54%) grades.

- Following the same pattern, smaller proportions of kindergarten (14%) and first-grade students (12%) were in the intensive grouping, compared to second (21%), and third grades (18%).

- The remaining students were in the strategic group, including 12 percent of kindergarten students and between 20 and 28 percent of students in first, second, and third grades.

- Native American students were less likely to attain benchmark and more likely to be in one of the lower two groupings than their white counterparts. This was also true of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), although the gap was not as wide.

- There was great variation in results within and among schools.

Table 6-1
Kindergarten Spring 2006 Instructional Support Recommendations, Cohort 1

Kindergarten		N	Spring 2006		
			Intensive	Strategic	Benchmark
All MT RF Cohort 1		803	14.4%	12.1%	73.5%
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian		265	19.2%	17.0%	63.8%
Hispanic		31	6.5%	16.1%	77.4%
White		497	12.5%	9.3%	78.3%
Other		10	10.0%	10.0%	80.0%
FRL					
Eligible		470	18.7%	13.8%	67.4%
Not Eligible		333	8.4%	9.6%	82.0%
Special Education					
Eligible		80	33.8%	13.8%	52.5%
Not Eligible		723	12.3%	11.9%	75.8%
ELL					
No		697	12.3%	10.8%	76.9%
Yes		106	28.3%	20.8%	50.9%
School, by District					
Billings	Newman	43	23.3%	11.6%	65.1%
	Ponderosa	49	18.4%	16.3%	65.3%
Butte	Kennedy	38	5.3%	5.3%	89.5%
	Whittier	51	2.0%	2.0%	96.1%
Centerville	Centerville	7	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Charlo	Charlo	26	3.8%	15.4%	80.8%
Dixon	Dixon	9	22.2%	0.0%	77.8%
East Helena	Eastgate	110	1.8%	10.9%	87.3%
Great Falls	Longfellow	34	14.7%	11.8%	73.5%
	West Great Falls	58	19.0%	10.3%	70.7%
Hardin	Crow Agency	41	17.1%	31.7%	51.2%
	Hardin Primary	76	19.7%	13.2%	67.1%
Hays/Lodge Pole	Lodge Pole	9	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%
Helena	Warren	38	23.7%	10.5%	65.8%
Lame Deer	Lame Deer	42	28.6%	14.3%	57.1%
Libby	Libby	77	23.4%	13.0%	63.6%
Ronan-Pablo	K William Harvey	54	13.0%	18.5%	68.5%
	Pablo	41	4.9%	4.9%	90.2%

Table 6-2
First Grade Spring 2006 Instructional Support Recommendations, Cohort 1

Grade 1		N	Spring 2006		
			Intensive	Strategic	Benchmark
All MT RF Cohort 1		832	11.8%	22.2%	66.0%
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian		265	18.9%	31.3%	49.8%
Hispanic		32	12.5%	25.0%	62.5%
White		519	7.9%	17.0%	75.1%
Other		16	18.8%	37.5%	43.8%
FRL					
Eligible		502	15.3%	25.9%	58.8%
Not Eligible		330	6.4%	16.7%	77.0%
Special Education					
Eligible		78	34.6%	34.6%	30.8%
Not Eligible		754	9.4%	21.0%	69.6%
ELL					
No		746	9.2%	21.6%	69.2%
Yes		86	33.7%	27.9%	38.4%
School, by District					
Billings	Newman	46	21.7%	26.1%	52.2%
	Ponderosa	54	14.8%	25.9%	59.3%
Butte	Kennedy	41	4.9%	2.4%	92.7%
	Whittier	58	3.4%	10.3%	86.2%
Centerville	Centerville	17	5.9%	17.6%	76.5%
Charlo	Charlo	26	11.5%	7.7%	80.8%
Dixon	Dixon	8	12.5%	50.0%	37.5%
East Helena	Eastgate	115	7.8%	9.6%	82.6%
Great Falls	Longfellow	37	13.5%	37.8%	48.6%
	West Great Falls	60	3.3%	16.7%	80.0%
Hardin	Crow Agency	33	27.3%	36.4%	36.4%
	Hardin Primary	67	6.0%	35.8%	58.2%
Hays/Lodge Pole	Lodge Pole	10	10.0%	30.0%	60.0%
Helena	Warren	39	7.7%	20.5%	71.8%
Lame Deer	Lame Deer	37	43.2%	13.5%	43.2%
Libby	Libby	83	15.7%	28.9%	55.4%
Ronan-Pablo	K William Harvey	56	3.6%	30.4%	66.1%
	Pablo	45	15.6%	33.3%	51.1%

Table 6-3
Second Grade Spring 2006 Instructional Support Recommendations, Cohort 1

Grade 2		N	Spring 2006		
			Intensive	Strategic	Benchmark
All MT RF Cohort 1		764	21.2%	19.9%	58.9%
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian		231	30.3%	20.8%	48.9%
Hispanic		29	31.0%	13.8%	55.2%
White		491	16.9%	19.6%	63.5%
Other		13	0.0%	30.8%	69.2%
FRL					
Eligible		458	27.3%	19.4%	53.3%
Not Eligible		306	12.1%	20.6%	67.3%
SPED					
Eligible		80	52.5%	20.0%	27.5%
Not Eligible		684	17.5%	19.9%	62.6%
ELL					
No		668	17.8%	20.2%	62.0%
Yes		96	44.8%	17.7%	37.5%
School, by District					
Billings	Newman	46	37.0%	23.9%	39.1%
	Ponderosa	54	31.5%	18.5%	50.0%
Butte	Kennedy	39	23.1%	10.3%	66.7%
	Whittier	53	5.7%	17.0%	77.4%
Centerville	Centerville	5	20.0%	60.0%	20.0%
Charlo	Charlo	28	3.6%	21.4%	75.0%
Dixon	Dixon	5	20.0%	20.0%	60.0%
East Helena	Eastgate	120	5.8%	21.7%	72.5%
Great Falls	Longfellow	36	30.6%	25.0%	44.4%
	West Great Falls	59	11.9%	8.5%	79.7%
Hardin	Crow Agency	34	32.4%	14.7%	52.9%
	Hardin Primary	65	15.4%	26.2%	58.5%
Hays/Lodge Pole	Lodge Pole	6	16.7%	33.3%	50.0%
Helena	Warren	38	34.2%	21.1%	44.7%
Lame Deer	Lame Deer	43	53.5%	18.6%	27.9%
Libby	Libby	56	17.9%	19.6%	62.5%
Ronan-Pablo	K William Harvey	49	28.6%	20.4%	51.0%
	Pablo	28	21.4%	25.0%	53.6%

Table 6-4
Third Grade Spring 2006 Instructional Support Recommendations, Cohort 1

Grade 3		N	Spring 2006		
			Intensive	Strategic	Benchmark
All MT RF Cohort 1		811	18.1%	27.6%	54.3%
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian		257	23.3%	31.1%	45.5%
Hispanic		30	40.0%	30.0%	30.0%
White		503	14.5%	24.9%	60.6%
Other		21	9.5%	47.6%	42.9%
FRL					
Eligible		505	24.6%	30.3%	45.1%
Not Eligible		306	7.5%	23.2%	69.3%
SPED					
Eligible		106	48.1%	26.4%	25.5%
Not Eligible		705	13.6%	27.8%	58.6%
ELL					
No		739	14.9%	27.3%	57.8%
Yes		72	51.4%	30.6%	18.1%
School, by District					
Billings	Newman	48	22.9%	41.7%	35.4%
	Ponderosa	61	36.1%	42.6%	21.3%
Butte	Kennedy	38	15.8%	5.3%	78.9%
	Whittier	54	13.0%	24.1%	63.0%
Centerville	Centerville	15	0.0%	13.3%	86.7%
Charlo	Charlo	17	17.6%	29.4%	52.9%
Dixon	Dixon	5	20.0%	0.0%	80.0%
East Helena	Radley	116	7.8%	30.2%	62.1%
Great Falls	Longfellow	30	16.7%	40.0%	43.3%
	West Great Falls	51	7.8%	25.5%	66.7%
Hardin	Crow Agency	30	43.3%	30.0%	26.7%
	Hardin Intermediate	88	13.6%	20.5%	65.9%
Hays/Lodge Pole	Lodge Pole	8	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%
Helena	Warren	46	19.6%	21.7%	58.7%
Lame Deer	Lame Deer	34	38.2%	26.5%	35.3%
Libby	Libby	83	15.7%	22.9%	61.4%
Ronan-Pablo	K William Harvey	60	16.7%	31.7%	51.7%
	Pablo	27	25.9%	37.0%	37.0%

Trends in Attainment of Benchmark Status

In addition to looking at results from the most recent assessment administration, it is useful to look at trends over time in the attainment of benchmark status on the DIBELS. Tables 6-5 through 6-8 present the percentage of cohort 1 students at benchmark.

Across grades, the data show the following patterns in the percentage of students attaining benchmark during the school year:

- The strongest gains occurred in kindergarten (47 percentage points); there was also substantial growth in second grade (12 percentage points). Increases in first and third grades were more moderate (six and seven percentage points, respectively).

- The rate of growth among Native American students was slightly higher in three of four grades than their white counterparts. Specifically, the percentage of kindergarten students at benchmark among Native American students grew by five percentage points more than their white counterparts; grade 2 and 3 gains were two percentage points and three percentage points respectively. This growth, however, was not enough to make up the achievement gap, and smaller proportions of Native American students attained benchmark than their peers.

- The rate of growth for FRL students in kindergarten was similar to that of their non-eligible counterparts. However, in the higher grades it did not continue to keep pace with their peers and the percentage of FRL students attaining benchmark fell behind.

Table 6-5
Percentage of Kindergarten Students at Benchmark Over Time, Cohort 1

Kindergarten		N	Percent at Benchmark			Percentage Point Change Fall 2005 to Spring 2006
			Fall 2005	Winter 2006	Spring 2006	
All MT RF Cohort 1		803	26.5%	61.0%	73.5%	46.9
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian		265	13.6%	45.3%	63.8%	50.2
Hispanic		31	19.4%	61.3%	77.4%	58.1
White		497	33.2%	69.2%	78.3%	45.1
Other		10	60.0%	70.0%	80.0%	20.0
FRL						
Eligible		470	20.4%	53.6%	67.4%	47.0
Not Eligible		333	35.1%	71.5%	82.0%	46.8
SPED						
Eligible		80	15.0%	37.5%	52.5%	37.5
Not Eligible		723	27.8%	63.6%	75.8%	48.0
ELL						
Yes		106	4.7%	27.4%	50.9%	46.2
No		697	29.8%	66.1%	76.9%	47.1
School, by District						
Billings	Newman	43	23.3%	53.5%	65.1%	41.9
	Ponderosa	49	12.2%	44.9%	65.3%	53.1
Butte	Kennedy	38	28.9%	65.8%	89.5%	60.5
	Whittier	51	33.3%	70.6%	96.1%	62.7
Centerville	Centerville	7	14.3%	28.6%	100.0%	85.7
Charlo	Charlo	26	61.5%	88.5%	80.8%	19.2
Dixon	Dixon	9	11.1%	44.4%	77.8%	66.7
East Helena	Eastgate	110	38.2%	90.9%	87.3%	49.1
Great Falls	Longfellow	34	38.2%	64.7%	73.5%	35.3
	West Great Falls	58	20.7%	60.3%	70.7%	50.0
Hardin	Crow Agency	41	14.6%	41.5%	51.2%	36.6
	Hardin Primary	76	22.4%	56.6%	67.1%	44.7
Hays/Lodge Pole	Lodge Pole	9	11.1%	33.3%	66.7%	55.6
Helena	Warren	38	34.2%	39.5%	65.8%	31.6
Lame Deer	Lame Deer	42	0.0%	19.0%	57.1%	57.1
Libby	Libby	77	37.7%	61.0%	63.6%	26.0
Ronan-Pablo	K William Harvey	54	18.5%	64.8%	68.5%	50.0
	Pablo	41	19.5%	73.2%	90.2%	70.7

Table 6-6
Percentage of First-Grade Students at Benchmark Over Time, Cohort 1

Grade 1		N	Percent at Benchmark			Percentage Point Change Fall 2005 to Winter 2006
			Fall 2005	Winter 2006	Spring 2006	
All MT RF Cohort 1		832	60.1%	59.1%	66.0%	5.9
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian		265	46.4%	43.8%	49.8%	3.4
Hispanic		32	71.9%	40.6%	62.5%	-9.4
White		519	66.3%	68.4%	75.1%	8.9
Other		16	62.5%	50.0%	43.8%	-18.8
FRL						
Eligible		502	54.0%	52.2%	58.8%	4.8
Not Eligible		330	69.4%	69.7%	77.0%	7.6
SPED						
Eligible		78	30.8%	29.5%	30.8%	0.0
Not Eligible		754	63.1%	62.2%	69.6%	6.5
ELL						
Yes		86	32.6%	31.4%	38.4%	5.8
No		746	63.3%	62.3%	69.2%	5.9
School, by District						
Billings	Newman	46	58.7%	41.3%	52.2%	-6.5
	Ponderosa	54	57.4%	44.4%	59.3%	1.9
Butte	Kennedy	41	80.5%	85.4%	92.7%	12.2
	Whittier	58	74.1%	77.6%	86.2%	12.1
Centerville	Centerville	17	76.5%	52.9%	76.5%	0.0
Charlo	Charlo	26	76.9%	76.9%	80.8%	3.9
Dixon	Dixon	8	50.0%	37.5%	37.5%	-12.5
East Helena	Eastgate	115	65.2%	73.9%	82.6%	17.4
Great Falls	Longfellow	37	54.1%	46.0%	48.7%	-5.4
	West Great Falls	60	68.3%	80.0%	80.0%	11.7
Hardin	Crow Agency	33	36.4%	30.3%	36.4%	0.0
	Hardin Primary	67	59.7%	50.8%	58.2%	-1.5
Hays/Lodge Pole	Lodge Pole	10	30.0%	30.0%	60.0%	30.0
Helena	Warren	39	53.9%	64.1%	71.8%	17.9
Lame Deer	Lame Deer	37	32.4%	35.1%	43.2%	10.8
Libby	Libby	83	59.0%	50.6%	55.4%	-3.6
Ronan-Pablo	K William Harvey	56	62.5%	67.9%	66.1%	3.6
	Pablo	45	46.7%	48.9%	51.1%	4.4

Table 6-7
Percentage of Second-Grade Students at Benchmark Over Time, Cohort 1

Grade 2		N	Percent at Benchmark			Percentage Point Change Fall 2005 to Spring 2006
			Fall 2005	Winter 2006	Spring 2006	
All MT RF Cohort 1		764	47.0%	65.3%	58.9%	11.9
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian		231	35.1%	52.4%	48.9%	13.9
Hispanic		29	55.2%	58.6%	55.2%	0.0
White		491	52.1%	71.1%	63.5%	11.4
Other		13	46.2%	92.3%	69.2%	23.1
FRL						
Eligible		458	41.0%	57.0%	53.3%	12.2
Not Eligible		306	55.9%	77.8%	67.3%	11.4
SPED						
Eligible		80	20.0%	32.5%	27.5%	7.5
Not Eligible		684	50.1%	69.2%	62.6%	12.4
ELL						
Yes		96	18.8%	37.5%	37.5%	18.8
No		668	51.0%	69.3%	62.0%	10.9
School, by District						
Billings	Newman	46	23.9%	52.2%	39.1%	15.2
	Ponderosa	54	37.0%	53.7%	50.0%	13.0
Butte	Kennedy	39	51.3%	59.0%	66.7%	15.4
	Whittier	53	52.8%	81.1%	77.4%	24.5
Centerville	Centerville	5	40.0%	20.0%	20.0%	-20.0
Charlo	Charlo	28	75.0%	82.1%	75.0%	0.0
Dixon	Dixon	5	20.0%	40.0%	60.0%	40.0
East Helena	Eastgate	120	61.7%	85.0%	72.5%	10.8
Great Falls	Longfellow	36	38.9%	63.9%	44.4%	5.6
	West Great Falls	59	71.2%	83.1%	79.7%	8.5
Hardin	Crow Agency	34	29.4%	47.1%	52.9%	23.5
	Hardin Primary	65	38.5%	61.5%	58.5%	20.0
Hays/Lodge Pole	Lodge Pole	6	16.7%	16.7%	50.0%	33.3
Helena	Warren	38	42.1%	50.0%	44.7%	2.6
Lame Deer	Lame Deer	43	18.6%	32.6%	27.9%	9.3
Libby	Libby	56	53.6%	69.6%	62.5%	8.9
Ronan-Pablo	K William Harvey	49	46.9%	67.3%	51.0%	4.1
	Pablo	28	46.4%	64.3%	53.6%	7.1

Table 6-8
Percentage of Third-Grade Students at Benchmark Over Time, Cohort 1

Grade 3		N	Percent at Benchmark			Change Fall 2005 to Spring 2006
			Fall 2005	Winter 2006	Spring 2006	
All MT RF Cohort 1		811	47.1%	51.4%	54.3%	7.2
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian		257	37.4%	41.2%	45.5%	8.2
Hispanic		30	23.3%	23.3%	30.0%	6.7
White		503	53.3%	58.4%	60.6%	7.4
Other		21	52.4%	47.6%	42.9%	-9.5
FRL						
Eligible		505	38.6%	43.2%	45.1%	6.5
Not Eligible		306	61.1%	65.0%	69.3%	8.2
SPED						
Eligible		106	21.7%	23.6%	25.5%	3.8
Not Eligible		705	50.9%	55.6%	58.6%	7.7
ELL						
Yes		72	16.7%	18.1%	18.1%	1.4
No		739	50.1%	54.7%	57.8%	7.7
School, by District						
Billings	Newman	48	33.3%	35.4%	35.4%	2.1
	Ponderosa	61	34.4%	31.1%	21.3%	-13.1
Butte	Kennedy	38	55.3%	60.5%	78.9%	23.7
	Whittier	54	53.7%	51.9%	63.0%	9.3
Centerville	Centerville	15	73.3%	80.0%	86.7%	13.3
Charlo	Charlo	17	58.8%	52.9%	52.9%	-5.9
Dixon	Dixon	5	20.0%	40.0%	80.0%	60.0
East Helena	Radley	116	57.8%	66.4%	62.1%	4.3
Great Falls	Longfellow	30	50.0%	43.3%	43.3%	-6.7
	West Great Falls	51	60.8%	72.5%	66.7%	5.9
Hardin	Crow Agency	30	13.3%	23.3%	26.7%	13.3
	Hardin Intermediate	88	44.3%	53.4%	65.9%	21.6
Hays/Lodge Pole	Lodge Pole	8	25.0%	25.0%	50.0%	25.0
Helena	Warren	46	56.5%	52.2%	58.7%	2.2
Lame Deer	Lame Deer	34	35.3%	35.3%	35.3%	0.0
Libby	Libby	83	47.0%	56.6%	61.4%	14.5
Ronan-Pablo	K William Harvey	60	48.3%	53.3%	51.7%	3.3
	Pablo	27	33.3%	33.3%	37.0%	3.7

Longitudinal Analyses, Cohort 1

This section examines changes in DIBELS results for intact cohorts of students over time; specifically, it looks at the progress of cohort 1 students who have had two years of Reading First; those who began kindergarten in fall 2004 and completed first grade in spring 2006. To ensure that these analyses capture students who received a full two years of the program, it only includes matched students for whom two years of intact (fall to spring) data are available (N=651).

Figure 6-5 below presents a bar graph of ISRs for those students described above, from spring of kindergarten to spring of first grade. The graph shows that overall, the percentage of students at benchmark declined slightly; 73 percent of kindergarten students were at benchmark in 2005, while 68 percent were at benchmark when they reached first grade. It should be noted that this decrease is not atypical, as the targets for the spring of kindergarten are comparatively easier to hit. The graph also depicts an increase in the percentage of students in the strategic group from 15 to 20 percent and a slight decrease in the percentage of students in intensive from 12 to 11 percent.

(N=651)
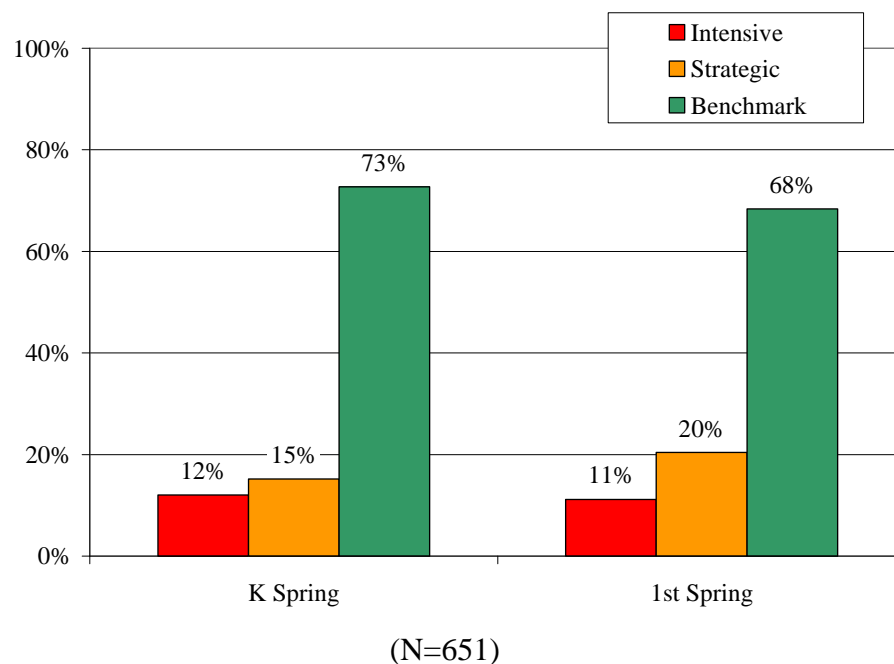
Figure 6-5. Percentage of Students in ISRs
Kindergarten (Spring 2005) Through First Grade (Spring 2006)

What the graph above does not provide is a more nuanced understanding of where this movement is occurring among ISRs: is the pattern driven by benchmark kids dropping to

strategic or intensive kids moving up to strategic? Therefore, another helpful way of looking at student progress over the past two years is by examining their movement from one ISR to another. The following three figures (6-6 to 6-8) do exactly that.

Figure 6-6 depicts where those students who began kindergarten at benchmark ended up at the end of first grade. Of these 178 students, almost all (93%) remained at benchmark; this is a measure of the ability of the core program to keep students who started at benchmark progressing at level. A very small proportion dropped to strategic (7%) or intensive (1%). These are very strong results.

Students who began Kindergarten at Benchmark ended First Grade in...

Benchmark, 93%

Strategic, 7%

Intensive, 1%

(N=178)
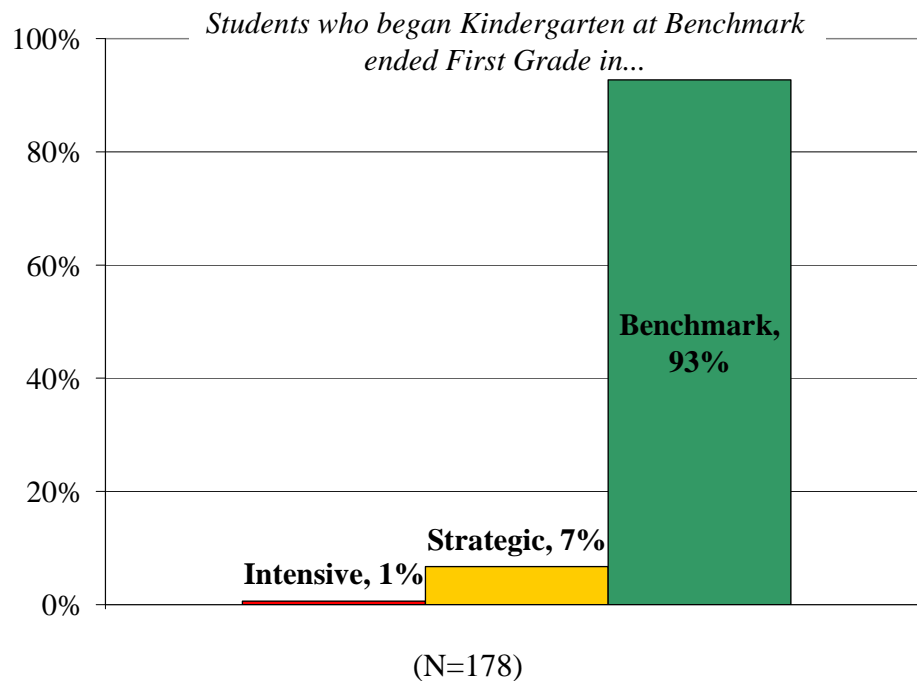
Figure 6-6. First-Grade Students who Began Kindergarten at Benchmark

Correspondingly, Figure 6-7 depicts where those students who began kindergarten in the strategic group ended up at the end of first grade. Of these 274 students, the majority (67%) moved up to benchmark; this is a measure of the effectiveness of strategic interventions in moving students who were somewhat below level up to benchmark. About one-quarter (23%) of these students remained in strategic, and a small proportion (10%) dropped to intensive.

100% ─

*Students who began Kindergarten in Strategic
ended First Grade in...*

80% ─

60% ─

40% ─

**Benchmark,
67%**

20% ─
**Intensive,
10%**   **Strategic,
23%**

0% ─

(N=274)
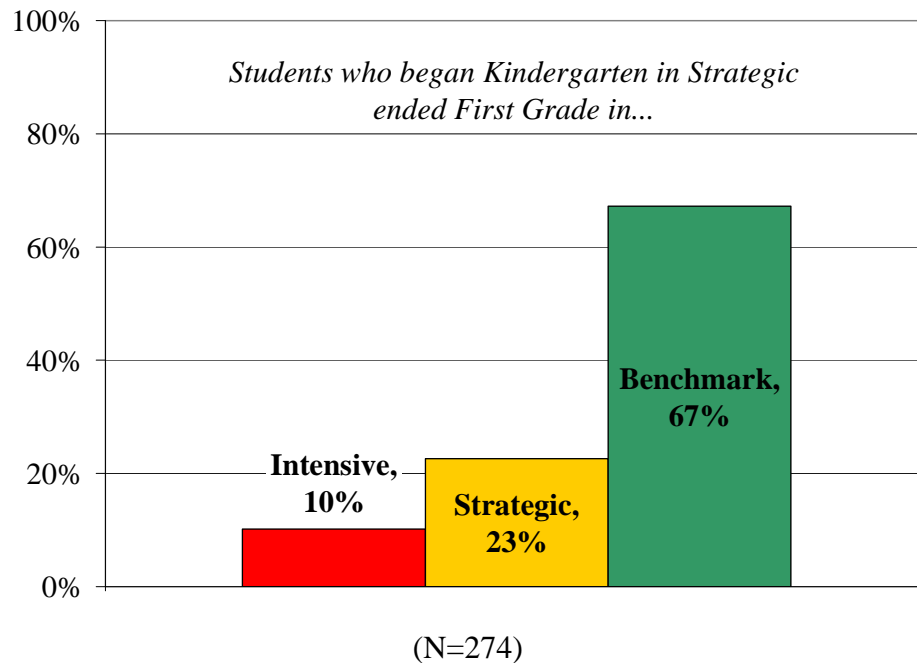
Figure 6-7. First-Grade Students who Began Kindergarten in Strategic

Finally, Figure 6-8 depicts where those students who began kindergarten in the intensive group ended up at the end of first grade. Of these 199 students, about one-half (48%) moved up to benchmark; this is a measure of the effectiveness of the most intensive interventions in moving the lowest-performing students up to benchmark. A slightly smaller proportion (30%) of these students moved up to strategic, and about one-fifth (22%) remained in intensive.

Students who began Kindergarten in Intensive ended First Grade in...

- Intensive, 22%
- Strategic, 30%
- Benchmark, 48%

(N=199)
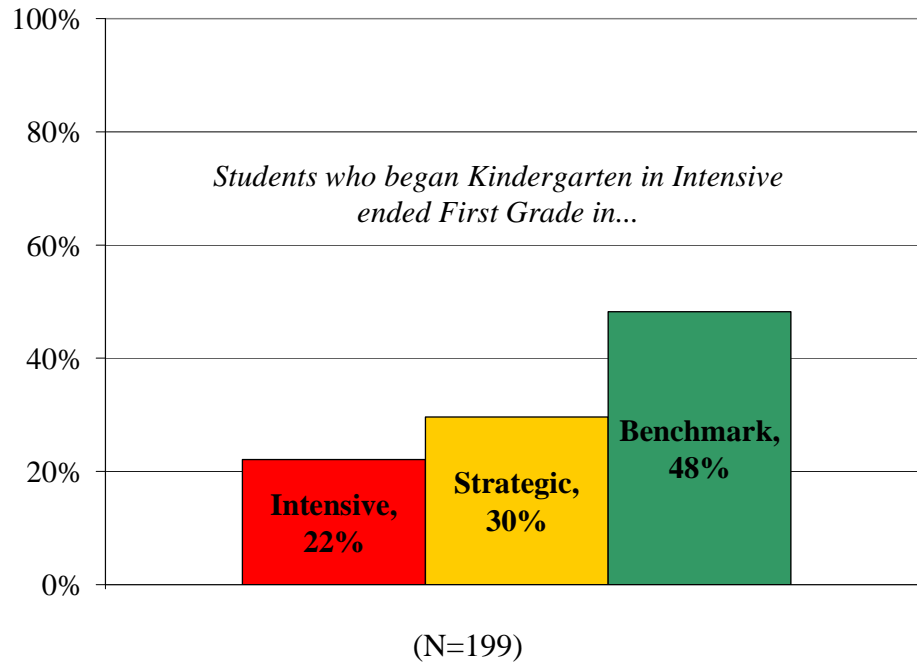
Figure 6-8. First-Grade Students who Began Kindergarten in Intensive

The initial longitudinal data indicate that there have been strong successes with students who began Reading First in kindergarten, particularly in retaining students at benchmark. There also have been substantial strides made in moving strategic and intensive students to benchmark. A caution to these data is that they only capture two years of implementation. The evaluation will continue to look at intact cohorts of students over time as schools move into additional years of implementation.

Cohort 2 Results

Cohort 2 schools began implementation in fall 2005. As these schools progress through subsequent years of implementation, it will be possible to conduct cross-year comparisons and analyze how this changes over time.

Spring 2006 Instructional Support Recommendations

This section presents cohort 2 results from the spring 2006 DIBELS for all grades. Tables 6-9 through 6-12 present the percentage of students in each of the Instructional Support Recommendation (ISR) categories: intensive, strategic, and benchmark. The numbers across each row should add up to 100 percent.

Across grades, the data show that in spring 2006:

- The largest proportion of students at benchmark was in first grade (68%), followed by kindergarten (63%), second grade (61%), and third grade (54%).

- Following this pattern, a much smaller proportion of first-grade students (9%) were in the intensive group, compared to kindergarten (20%), second (20%), and third grades (16%).

- The smallest proportion of students in strategic was in kindergarten (16%). In first, second, and third grades, between 19 and 31 percent of students were in this category.

- Although Native American students were slightly less likely to attain benchmark and more likely to be in the intensive group, this gap was not as pronounced as it has been in past analyses. Specifically, in grade 1, the gap in the percentage of Native American versus white students at benchmark was only seven percentage points (63% versus 70%) and in grade 3 the gap was even smaller; five percentage points (51% versus 56%).

- This was also true of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch (FRL), for whom there was little gap in kindergarten and first grade in particular.

Table 6-9
Kindergarten Spring 2006 Instructional Support Recommendations, Cohort 2

Kindergarten		N	Spring 2006		
			Intensive	Strategic	Benchmark
All MT RF Cohort 2		412	20.4%	16.3%	63.3%
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian		145	22.8%	21.4%	55.9%
Hispanic		8	25.0%	12.5%	62.5%
White		250	19.2%	13.6%	67.2%
Other		9	11.1%	11.1%	77.8%
FRL					
Eligible		271	20.7%	16.6%	62.7%
Not Eligible		141	19.9%	15.6%	64.5%
SPED					
Eligible		23	39.1%	21.7%	39.1%
Not Eligible		389	19.3%	15.9%	64.8%
ELL					
No		387	19.1%	16.5%	64.3%
Yes		25	40.0%	12.0%	48.0%
School, by District					
Box Elder	Box Elder	26	38.5%	15.4%	46.2%
Butte	West Butte	62	16.1%	8.1%	75.8%
Dodson	Dodson	4	25.0%	50.0%	25.0%
East Glacier Park	East Glacier Park	3	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%
Evergreen	East Evergreen	71	16.9%	12.7%	70.4%
Frazer	Frazer	8	37.5%	12.5%	50.0%
Great Falls	Morningside	36	0.0%	5.6%	94.4%
Harlem	Harlem	31	22.6%	38.7%	38.7%
Heart Butte	Heart Butte	14	42.9%	21.4%	35.7%
Lodge Grass	Lodge Grass	12	0.0%	25.0%	75.0%
Rocky Boy	Rocky Boy	40	12.5%	15.0%	72.5%
Somers	Lakeside	45	28.9%	15.6%	55.6%
Stevensville	Stevensville	60	28.3%	20.0%	51.7%

Table 6-10
First Grade Spring 2006 Instructional Support Recommendations, Cohort 2

Grade 1		N	Spring 2006		
			Intensive	Strategic	Benchmark
All MT RF Cohort 2		403	9.2%	23.3%	67.5%
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian		160	10.0%	26.9%	63.1%
Hispanic		11	9.1%	27.3%	63.6%
White		227	8.8%	20.7%	70.5%
Other		5	0.0%	20.0%	80.0%
FRL					
Eligible		260	9.6%	26.9%	63.5%
Not Eligible		143	8.4%	16.8%	74.8%
SPED					
Eligible		34	41.2%	17.6%	41.2%
Not Eligible		369	6.2%	23.8%	69.9%
ELL					
No		398	8.8%	23.4%	67.8%
Yes		5	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%
School, by District					
Box Elder	Box Elder	24	16.7%	25.0%	58.3%
Butte	West Butte	43	7.0%	23.3%	69.8%
Dodson	Dodson	3	0.0%	33.3%	66.7%
East Glacier Park	East Glacier Park	1	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Evergreen	East Evergreen	63	12.7%	23.8%	63.5%
Frazer	Frazer	8	0.0%	12.5%	87.5%
Great Falls	Morningside	41	0.0%	4.9%	95.1%
Harlem	Harlem	36	11.1%	36.1%	52.8%
Heart Butte	Heart Butte	14	21.4%	28.6%	50.0%
Lodge Grass	Lodge Grass	14	0.0%	14.3%	85.7%
Rocky Boy	Rocky Boy	48	2.1%	29.2%	68.8%
Somers	Lakeside	57	5.3%	24.6%	70.2%
Stevensville	Stevensville	51	19.6%	23.5%	56.9%

Table 6-11
Second Grade Spring 2006 Instructional Support Recommendations, Cohort 2

Grade 2		N	Spring 2006		
			Intensive	Strategic	Benchmark
All MT RF Cohort 2		439	20.5%	18.7%	60.8%
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian		156	26.9%	19.2%	53.8%
Hispanic		11	27.3%	27.3%	45.5%
White		268	16.4%	18.3%	65.3%
Other		4	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%
FRL					
Eligible		294	23.5%	21.4%	55.1%
Not Eligible		145	14.5%	13.1%	72.4%
SPED					
Eligible		36	72.2%	8.3%	19.4%
Not Eligible		403	15.9%	19.6%	64.5%
ELL					
No		411	19.0%	17.8%	63.3%
Yes		28	42.9%	32.1%	25.0%
School, by District					
Box Elder	Box Elder	26	19.2%	11.5%	69.2%
Butte	West Butte	48	14.6%	27.1%	58.3%
Dodson	Dodson	1	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
East Glacier Park	East Glacier Park	2	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%
Evergreen	East Evergreen	90	17.8%	14.4%	67.8%
Frazer	Frazer	2	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Great Falls	Morningside	38	10.5%	13.2%	76.3%
Harlem	Harlem	42	19.0%	23.8%	57.1%
Heart Butte	Heart Butte	10	30.0%	10.0%	60.0%
Lodge Grass	Lodge Grass	22	40.9%	9.1%	50.0%
Rocky Boy	Rocky Boy	37	24.3%	21.6%	54.1%
Somers	Lakeside	56	16.1%	23.2%	60.7%
Stevensville	Stevensville	65	24.6%	20.0%	55.4%

Table 6-12
Third Grade Spring 2006 Instructional Support Recommendations, Cohort 2

Grade 3		N	Spring 2006		
			Intensive	Strategic	Benchmark
All MT RF Cohort 2		419	15.5%	30.5%	53.9%
Race/Ethnicity					
American Indian		147	22.4%	26.5%	51.0%
Hispanic		9	22.2%	22.2%	55.6%
White		260	11.5%	32.7%	55.8%
Other		3	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%
FRL					
Eligible		255	18.8%	34.5%	46.7%
Not Eligible		164	10.4%	24.4%	65.2%
SPED					
Eligible		30	43.3%	33.3%	23.3%
Not Eligible		389	13.4%	30.3%	56.3%
ELL					
No		388	13.4%	29.6%	57.0%
Yes		31	41.9%	41.9%	16.1%
School, by District					
Box Elder	Box Elder	31	9.7%	19.4%	71.0%
Butte	West Butte	57	15.8%	40.4%	43.9%
Dodson	Dodson	2	50.0%	0.0%	50.0%
East Glacier Park	East Glacier Park	4	25.0%	0.0%	75.0%
Evergreen	East Evergreen	62	19.4%	29.0%	51.6%
Frazer	Frazer	5	40.0%	20.0%	40.0%
Great Falls	Morningside	42	9.5%	31.0%	59.5%
Harlem	Harlem	34	8.8%	26.5%	64.7%
Heart Butte	Heart Butte	13	46.2%	15.4%	38.5%
Lodge Grass	Lodge Grass	14	42.9%	28.6%	28.6%
Rocky Boy	Rocky Boy	36	25.0%	41.7%	33.3%
Somers	Lakeside	60	3.3%	41.7%	55.0%
Stevensville	Stevensville	59	11.9%	20.3%	67.8%

Trends in Attainment of Benchmark Status

In addition to looking at results from the most recent assessment administration, it is useful to look at trends over time in the attainment of benchmark status on the DIBELS. Tables 6-13 through 6-16 present the percentage of students at benchmark for cohort 2 schools.

Across grades, the data show the following patterns in the percentage of students attaining benchmark during the school year:

- There were very strong gains in kindergarten (42 percentage points) and first grade (22 percentage points). Increases in first and third grades were also substantial, although slightly more moderate (12 and 11 percentage points, respectively).

- The rate of growth among Native American students kept pace with their peers in all grades except for second; however, this was not enough to make up the achievement gap in most cases, and smaller proportions of Native American students attained benchmark than their peers.

- The rate of growth for FRL students in kindergarten and first grade was similar to that of their non-eligible counterparts. However, in the higher grades it did not continue to keep pace with their peers and the percentage of FRL students attaining benchmark fell behind.

- There were differences within and among cohort 2 schools.

Table 6-13
Percentage of Kindergarten Students at Benchmark Over Time, Cohort 2

Kindergarten		N	Percent at Benchmark			Percentage Point Change Fall 2005 to Spring 2006
			Fall 2005	Winter 2006	Spring 2006	
All MT RF Cohort 2		412	21.8%	53.2%	63.3%	41.5
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian		145	16.6%	42.8%	55.9%	39.3
Hispanic		8	25.0%	37.5%	62.5%	37.5
White		250	24.0%	59.2%	67.2%	43.2
Other		9	44.4%	66.7%	77.8%	33.3
FRL						
Eligible		271	19.6%	50.6%	62.7%	43.2
Not Eligible		141	26.2%	58.2%	64.5%	38.3
SPED						
Eligible		23	8.7%	21.7%	39.1%	30.4
Not Eligible		389	22.6%	55.0%	64.8%	42.2
ELL						
Yes		25	24.0%	40.0%	48.0%	24.0
No		387	21.7%	54.0%	64.3%	42.6
School, by District						
Box Elder	Box Elder	26	26.9%	42.3%	46.2%	19.2
Butte	West Butte	62	25.8%	69.4%	75.8%	50.0
Dodson	Dodson	4	0.0%	0.0%	25.0%	25.0
East Glacier Park	East Glacier Park	3	33.3%	33.3%	66.7%	33.3
Evergreen	East Evergreen	71	28.2%	57.7%	70.4%	42.3
Frazer	Frazer	8	12.5%	37.5%	50.0%	37.5
Great Falls	Morningside	36	22.2%	88.9%	94.4%	72.2
Harlem	Harlem	31	6.5%	16.1%	38.7%	32.3
Heart Butte	Heart Butte	14	7.1%	7.1%	35.7%	28.6
Lodge Grass	Lodge Grass	12	16.7%	58.3%	75.0%	58.3
Rocky Boy	Rocky Boy	40	20.0%	67.5%	72.5%	52.5
Somers	Lakeside	45	33.3%	44.4%	55.6%	22.2
Stevensville	Stevensville	60	15.0%	46.7%	51.7%	36.7

Table 6-14
Percentage of First-Grade Students at Benchmark Over Time, Cohort 2

Grade 1		N	Percent at Benchmark			Percentage Point Change Fall 2005 to Spring 2006
			Fall 2005	Winter 2006	Spring 2006	
All MT RF Cohort 2		403	45.2%	56.6%	67.5%	22.3
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian		160	35.0%	48.1%	63.1%	28.1
Hispanic		11	45.5%	36.4%	63.6%	18.2
White		227	52.0%	63.4%	70.5%	18.5
Other		5	60.0%	60.0%	80.0%	20.0
FRL						
Eligible		260	41.5%	50.4%	63.5%	21.9
Not Eligible		143	51.7%	67.8%	74.8%	23.1
SPED						
Eligible		34	20.6%	23.5%	41.2%	20.6
Not Eligible		369	47.4%	59.6%	69.9%	22.5
ELL						
Yes		5	20.0%	20.0%	40.0%	20.0
No		398	45.5%	57.0%	67.8%	22.4
School, by District						
Box Elder	Box Elder	24	54.2%	50.0%	58.3%	4.2
Butte	West Butte	43	65.1%	62.8%	69.8%	4.7
Dodson	Dodson	3	0.0%	66.7%	66.7%	66.7
East Glacier Park	East Glacier Park*					
Evergreen	East Evergreen	63	36.5%	41.3%	63.5%	27.0
Frazer	Frazer	8	75.0%	87.5%	87.5%	12.5
Great Falls	Morningside	41	65.9%	95.1%	95.1%	29.3
Harlem	Harlem	36	19.4%	38.9%	52.8%	33.3
Heart Butte	Heart Butte	14	28.6%	35.7%	50.0%	21.4
Lodge Grass	Lodge Grass	14	28.6%	64.3%	85.7%	57.1
Rocky Boy	Rocky Boy	48	35.4%	45.8%	68.8%	33.3
Somers	Lakeside	57	52.6%	70.2%	70.2%	17.5
Stevensville	Stevensville	51	45.1%	49.0%	56.9%	11.8

*This school did not have first-grade students with matched data.

Table 6-15
Percentage of Second-Grade Students at Benchmark Over Time, Cohort 2

Grade 2		N	Percent at Benchmark			Percentage Point Change Fall 2005 to Spring 2006
			Fall 2005	Winter 2006	Spring 2006	
All MT RF Cohort 2		439	48.5%	67.7%	60.8%	12.3
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian		156	46.8%	57.1%	53.8%	7.1
Hispanic		11	27.3%	36.4%	45.5%	18.2
White		268	50.4%	75.0%	65.3%	14.9
Other		4	50.0%	75.0%	75.0%	25.0
FRL						
Eligible		294	46.9%	64.3%	55.1%	8.2
Not Eligible		145	51.7%	74.5%	72.4%	20.7
SPED						
Eligible		36	22.2%	22.2%	19.4%	-2.8
Not Eligible		403	50.9%	71.7%	64.5%	13.6
ELL						
Yes		28	35.7%	42.9%	25.0%	-10.7
No		411	49.4%	69.3%	63.3%	13.9
School, by District						
Box Elder	Box Elder	26	61.5%	73.1%	69.2%	7.7
Butte	West Butte	48	62.5%	81.3%	58.3%	-4.2
Dodson	Dodson*					
East Glacier Park	East Glacier Park*					
Evergreen	East Evergreen	90	45.6%	75.6%	67.8%	22.2
Frazer	Frazer*					
Great Falls	Morningside	38	63.2%	78.9%	76.3%	13.2
Harlem	Harlem	42	47.6%	61.9%	57.1%	9.5
Heart Butte	Heart Butte	10	60.0%	60.0%	60.0%	0.0
Lodge Grass	Lodge Grass	22	40.9%	40.9%	50.0%	9.1
Rocky Boy	Rocky Boy	37	48.6%	59.5%	54.1%	5.4
Somers	Lakeside	56	32.1%	62.5%	60.7%	28.6
Stevensville	Stevensville	65	47.7%	66.2%	55.4%	7.7

*These schools did not have second-grade students with matched data.

Table 6-16
Percentage of Third-Grade Students at Benchmark Over Time, Cohort 2

Grade 3		N	Fall 2005	Winter 2006	Spring 2006	Percentage Point Change Fall 2005 to Spring 2006
			Percent at Benchmark			
All MT RF Cohort 2		419	42.7%	50.6%	53.9%	11.2
Race/Ethnicity						
American Indian		147	38.8%	42.2%	51.0%	12.2
Hispanic		9	33.3%	44.4%	55.6%	22.2
White		260	45.4%	55.8%	55.8%	10.4
Other		3	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	0.0
FRL						
Eligible		255	38.8%	44.3%	46.7%	7.8
Not Eligible		164	48.8%	60.4%	65.2%	16.5
SPED						
Eligible		30	16.7%	26.7%	23.3%	6.7
Not Eligible		389	44.7%	52.4%	56.3%	11.6
ELL						
Yes		31	12.9%	22.6%	16.1%	3.2
No		388	45.1%	52.8%	57.0%	11.9
School, by District						
Box Elder	Box Elder	31	51.6%	64.5%	71.0%	19.4
Butte	West Butte	57	38.6%	50.9%	43.9%	5.3
Dodson	Dodson	2	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0
East Glacier Park	East Glacier Park	4	25.0%	50.0%	75.0%	50.0
Evergreen	East Evergreen	62	50.0%	64.5%	51.6%	1.6
Frazer	Frazer	5	20.0%	40.0%	40.0%	20.0
Great Falls	Morningside	42	38.1%	42.9%	59.5%	21.4
Harlem	Harlem	34	50.0%	47.1%	64.7%	14.7
Heart Butte	Heart Butte	13	23.1%	30.8%	38.5%	15.4
Lodge Grass	Lodge Grass	14	21.4%	14.3%	28.6%	7.1
Rocky Boy	Rocky Boy	36	33.3%	33.3%	33.3%	0.0
Somers	Lakeside	60	38.3%	40.0%	55.0%	16.7
Stevensville	Stevensville	59	55.9%	71.2%	67.8%	11.9

Recommendations

A summary of key findings from this report can be found in the Executive Summary. The recommendations below were developed based on the findings and in conversation with the state project director.

Continue to provide high-quality professional development and technical assistance to schools. Data suggest very high levels of satisfaction with state support of schools, particularly the professional development and technical assistance from state project staff members. This finding suggests that the state already uses many effective strategies and approaches in their work with schools, perhaps most notably the individualized technical assistance from state reading specialists and the opportunities for coaches and principals to network.

Provide support and training to help coaches further differentiate their coaching and maximize their time spent with teachers. While many coaches are spending a good deal of time working with teachers, some are not spending as much time as may be necessary to meet teachers' needs. The state can identify and continue to work with coaches to make sure they are maximizing their time in classrooms and with teachers.

Furthermore, just as Reading First asks teachers to differentiate their instruction, coaches can further differentiate their assistance to teachers. While many cohort 2 coaches focused on helping teachers learn the core program and templates in Year 1, Year 2 will bring opportunities to focus on a broader array of issues, from student engagement strategies to differentiating instruction.

Many cohort 1 schools may be ready for peer coaching. That is, in schools where trust, communication, and open-door policies are established, teachers are ready to observe, provide feedback, and coach one another. To do this, they need training and protocols which could be delivered by the state to reading coaches who could, in turn, bring training to their school. Alternatively, a state-led peer coaching training for selected teachers could be organized.

Peer coaching is also one way to help ensure that all teachers benefit from coaching, not just the "new" or "most struggling" teachers. Trainings could also address other strategies for reaching all teachers—including those who seem to be "doing fine."

Identify and, if possible, eliminate excess paperwork. Coaches reported that a fairly high percentage of their time (10% on average, but sometimes as high as 19%) was dedicated to paperwork. While much of this paperwork may be necessary to carefully plan, execute, and document grant implementation and coaching activities, there may be some excess. The state should ask coaches for further feedback on this topic; what paperwork were they thinking of when they reported 10 percent of their time was spent

on paperwork? What do coaches consider to be the most and least useful paperwork for their job? And what paperwork does the state identify as most crucial for monitoring and helping schools? These conversations can help the state determine if any paperwork can be removed or streamlined.

Continue to build the content of Knowledge Box; encourage and model its use. Data suggest that most participants see a strong potential in Knowledge Box, but simply are not using it very often. The state already plans to continue building useful content (e.g., adding more mini-lessons) and provide regular updates on the scope and sequence. Schools can provide ideas for additional content or structures that would be helpful. State project staff members should also use Knowledge Box during their site visits and trainings; modeling its use to coaches, principals, and teachers. Finally, one way the state has already identified to address the continuing technical challenges is to work with the program company to provide online access.

Address real or perceived concerns about the "high-achieving" kids. A concerned raised in multiple schools was a lack of flexibility or options to work with high-achieving students. The state reported that it has offered to work with any school that wants to create a plan for addressing their needs; however, this offer should be repeated. Furthermore, schools could benefit from hearing from colleagues who have already-approved plans to change lesson pacing, provide enrichment activities, create flexible groupings, or other strategies that the state will endorse if schools can demonstrate a data-based need.

Share and use evaluation findings. Reading First state project staff members have shown themselves to be sophisticated users of data schools and districts are developing this capacity as well. Ideally, findings of this report could further contribute to the use of data to make decisions about professional development, technical assistance, and even school-level implementation. The state is already planning to distribute the full report to all participating schools, to colleagues in other departments at OPI, and to Reading First collaborators such as professional development providers. The report might also be used to:

- Celebrate successes.

- Create press releases or information for parents or communities about Reading First.

- Begin discussions or training on a specific topic (e.g., data about student engagement in cohort 2 classrooms could be discussed by coaches who are trying to work with teachers on that issue).

- Dig deeper into the data (e.g., the paperwork issue).

- Use project-wide findings to address sensitive school-specific issues (e.g., "Across the state, some principals are struggling to provide feedback to teachers after observations. What is your experience?").

- Use sections of the report to "check in" about progress and challenges throughout the year.

In the best case scenario, findings from this report can be used by multiple audiences for multiple purposes over the course of the year.

References

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APPENDICES